

FROM TYRANT TO
PHILOSOPHER-KING

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FROM TYRANT TO
PHILOSOPHER-KING

A Literary History of Alexander the Great
in Medieval and Early Modern England

by

Charles Russell Stone



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INTRODUCTION

In the 1609 catalogue of John Lumley, owner of ‘the largest private library in the Elizabethan period’, the largely unknown item 971 (now London, British Library, MS Royal, 13. A. 1) appears three entries ahead of Bartholomeus Facius’s Latin translation of Arrian’s *Anabasis Alexandri*, a Greek history of Alexander’s campaigns and expeditions based on the accounts of two of his Macedonian officers.¹ That the two books resided in the same collection required extraordinary twists of fate, and their paths have diverged ever since. Since its reintroduction to the Latin West by Italian translators and printers in the early sixteenth century,² Arrian’s biography of Alexander has become well known to modern readers in mass-market paperbacks, and it remains the preferred narrative of many modern historians because of the propinquity of its sources to Alexander’s lifetime.³ In contrast, BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 has unsurprisingly remained in obscurity, as an unedited eleventh-century Latin manuscript, even one relating to a figure as predominant in medieval literature as Alexander, has little chance of being appreciated beyond a few curious scholars.

¹ Jayne and Johnson, eds, *The Lumley Library: The Catalogue of 1609*, p. 1.

² According to the online *Censimento nazionale delle edizioni italiane del XVI secolo (EDIT16)*, the earliest copies of Facius’s version of the *Anabasis* date to 1508. While Latin translations of Arrian were printed in the first decade of the sixteenth century, the first Greek edition was printed in Venice in 1535. For a brief survey of printed Alexander histories in early modern Europe, see Heckel and Tritle, eds, *Alexander the Great*, p. 3.

³ A second-century, Greek-speaking Roman senator, Arrian trusted his sources, Ptolemy I and Aristobalus, as men with first-hand knowledge of Alexander’s campaigns, and although J. R. Hamilton, in Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, trans. by de Sélincourt, p. 23 argues for the ‘distinctly “apologetic” character’ of Arrian’s history, it maintains nonetheless an authoritative reputation.

However, as I argue throughout this book, the last item in the Royal manuscript represents a seminal moment in the medieval reception of Alexander, for it features the earliest surviving attempt in the Latin West to promote a 'true history', what it identifies as 'uera hystoria', of the conqueror over the claims of Alexander romances.⁴ The medieval conception of Alexander owed a great deal to the extraordinary influence of these romances, which originated as a late antique Greek narrative that was concerned not with Macedonian history but with the legendary biography of Alexander. This original romance presents him as the heroic, swashbuckling conqueror of the East, a man of disguise and trickery, a cataloguer of Indian marvels for his famous teacher Aristotle, and, most shockingly, the son of an exiled Egyptian pharaoh and sorcerer who seduced Alexander's mother Olympias in the guise of a dragon, according to some versions, and the god Ammon, according to others. Once translated into Latin, this romance disseminated widely across Europe (its descendents also appear in the Royal manuscript), and just as Arrian had sought a millennium earlier to contradict the discrepancies and mendacities that he regretted among the histories of the conqueror available in the second-century Roman Empire, so this manuscript of eleventh-century England illustrates how pervasive the legends of Alexander were in the Middle Ages, how many writers and readers accepted them as historical truth, and how a critical mind was required to distinguish fact from fiction. The story of how this medieval manuscript and this sixteenth-century printed book came both into physical and intellectual proximity of each other is the story of the creation in medieval and early modern England of the Alexander still known to and debated among historians and the general public today.

This creation depended, as I claim in this book, on the recovery of histories of Alexander written in the early Roman Empire, but we can only appreciate the collective influence of these histories on later notions of Alexander by examining the wealth of manuscripts and incunabula that constitute his medieval and early modern legacy. My intent is not to join the impressive ranks of biographies of Alexander but to offer a history of the histories of Alexander, the classical texts that were interpolated, redacted, and translated by scholars from the twelfth to the seventeenth century and that account for our modern dichotomous conception of Alexander as a disturbingly violent tyrant or a political visionary who established a harmonious, multicultural empire.

⁴ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, fol. 94^v.

The Roman Alexander

Alexander held a predominant place in the medieval imagination, and as long ago explained by George Cary, the legacy of the famed conqueror was promulgated by romances, chronicles, moral anecdotes, exempla, theological texts, and the vernacular literature of the late Middle Ages, a textual range that granted Alexander a stature unlike any other figure of the classical tradition.⁵ As Walter Map writes in his twelfth-century satire, the *De nugis curialium*:

Alexander of Macedon, who blamed the narrowness of the world he had subdued, looked at last on the tomb of Achilles, and said with a sigh: 'Happy are you, young hero, who enjoy such a proclaimer of your merits', meaning Homer. That great Alexander is my witness that many survive in the descriptions of authors, even all who have succeeded in living amongst men after their death. But what did Alexander's sighs mean? He meant assuredly to mourn his own merits, which stood in need of a great poet, if his death-day were not to blot him out entirely.⁶

Alexander may have lacked a Homer or a Virgil to perpetuate his myth in the epic genre,⁷ yet he inspired a legion of writers who participated in these 'descriptions', as this passage suggests, of his legacy. Romances no doubt provided, for example, their audience with a superficial knowledge of Alexander as a ruler who was said to have been fathered by a sorcerer, conquered much of the known world in his twenties, and poisoned in Babylon shortly thereafter, but they had to compete with several other types of literature within the medieval amalgam of apocryphal tales, paeans, and harsh judgments. Still, who Alexander really was, what sort of character he possessed, and how he viewed himself and his empire remained frustrating questions in the Middle Ages. To extend Andrew Stewart's warning about images of the conqueror to the plethora of texts that related his career, they are 'best understood as mobilizations of the notion "Alexander" within and dependent upon the particular contexts of production and use from which they derive'.⁸

Modern readers who seek to resolve such problems and understand pre-medieval 'mobilizations' of Alexander have recourse to five ancient histories

⁵ Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*.

⁶ Walter Map, *De nugis curialium*, ed. and trans. by James, p. 405.

⁷ Gautier [Walter] de Châtillon remedied this in the twelfth century with his *Alexandreis*; see Gautier de Châtillon, *Alexandreis*, ed. by Colker (edition), and Gautier de Châtillon, *Alexandreis*, trans. by Townsend (translation).

⁸ Stewart, *Faces of Power: Alexander's Image*, p. 6.

— in chronological order, Diodorus Siculus's *Bibliotheca historica*, Quintus Curtius Rufus's *Historia Alexandri Magni*, Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandri*, Plutarch's studies of the conqueror in the *Parallel Lives* and the moral essay *On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander the Great*, and Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories* by Pompeius Trogus — any of the dizzying array of modern biographies, or even motion pictures.⁹ No such luxury existed for the majority of medieval writers and readers. In order to find a historical narrative of Alexander, they could rely on Orosius's *Historia adversum paganos* or the long line of chroniclers who relied on him as a Christian authority, yet Orosius condemned Alexander outright as a pagan and distorted what his predecessors (and sometimes sources), Roman historians from the first century BC to the second century AD, wrote about the conqueror nearer their own age. The five aforementioned classical histories of Alexander would all become available instead by the sixteenth century, but this process of recovery depended largely on two intellectual movements: twelfth-century monasticism began an awareness of and interest in Alexander's reputation among the Latin histories and philosophical texts of the early Roman Empire, and these texts were collated with their second-century Greek counterparts by humanist scholars and translators in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Although these classical sources differed in language (and thus the Greek histories by Diodorus, Arrian, and Plutarch did not reach Western Europe until well after the *Philippic Histories* and Curtius Rufus's *Historia Alexandri Magni*), they were all products of the Roman Empire and therefore the collective result of the Roman invention of Alexander the Great's reputation.

Between the twelfth and the sixteenth century, when medieval and early modern writers became familiar with these five histories of Alexander, this Roman invention was reborn and essentially established the disputed conception of Alexander that we still possess today. Fragments of other ancient Greek historians of Alexander survive, but these five texts, divided by their condemnation of and admiration for the conqueror, provide us with the most complete yet conflicting classical portrait of him.¹⁰ While Pompeius Trogus denigrates Alexander for his decadence and corruption in the *Philippic Histories* (known in the Middle Ages through Justin's epitome), the other four authors, particu-

⁹ Roisman, ed., *Alexander the Great*, is particularly helpful for contextualizing the conqueror's modern reception within classical traditions. Alexander has inspired two English-language films: Robert Rossen's 'Alexander the Great' (1956) and Oliver Stone's 'Alexander' (2004). For the reception of the latter, see Cartledge and Rose, eds, *Responses to Oliver Stone's Alexander*.

¹⁰ The Greek fragments are translated by Robinson, *The History of Alexander the Great*.

larly Arrian and Plutarch, forgive the conqueror for his faults and celebrate his ambition to defeat and unite disparate cultures under the yoke of political and philosophical idealism. To complicate the question of authority, all of these histories raise numerous doubts over their accuracy and intent in the Roman Empire. As Dawn L. Gilley and Ian Worthington have assessed these texts and the Roman Alexander portrayed by them:

our picture of Alexander is frustratingly inadequate: it is marred by questions such as whether the later narrative writers [i.e., the historians named above] and Plutarch in his biography got their facts right, whether they read the earlier (now lost) sources properly, or whether they presented an Alexander that was the product not of his times but of the Roman historical and social backgrounds in which they were writing.¹¹

That Alexander was a violent drunkard infamous for mistrusting and even executing his own men was a legacy created by Roman philosophers and historians in the 'historical and social backgrounds' of the late Republic and early Empire. For Cicero, who witnessed the end of the Republic and adapted for Marc Antony Demosthenes' *Philippics* (originally intended as a polemic against the tyrannical ambitions of Alexander's father Philip), and Seneca, who in the reign of Nero so insisted on Alexander's abuses of power and immoral character that he launched a Stoic attack on the conqueror that would remain influential in the Latin West for one and a half millennia, Alexander represented the worst of dictatorship.

He was a despicable figure who was corrupted by incredible success in the East, fuelled by egocentrism and wine, and capable of horrendous violence against his own men. In conquering Persia and marching into India, Alexander appropriated oriental customs, seen from the Roman perspective as luxurious, decadent, and tyrannical, and began a policy of cultural unification that consolidated his authority over various foes turned subjects yet led him to become geographically and ideologically deracinated from his Macedonian upbringing. The recent claim that the 'story of Alexander as we receive it today is essentially a Roman story' that was 'constructed and developed during the period of Roman domination of the Mediterranean world' is undeniable,¹² yet it demands qualification for understanding his medieval and early modern reception. I thus cannot claim as my own the argument that the Romans dictated

¹¹ Gilley and Worthington, 'Alexander the Great, Macedonia and Asia', p. 187.

¹² Spencer, *The Roman Alexander*, p. xiv.

Alexander's reputation, yet I assert in this study that when these Roman notions of Alexander were rediscovered in medieval and early modern England — as evident in six centuries' worth of manuscripts and incunabula — they radically altered his legacy.

The Classical Alexander in Medieval England

A number of recent studies have shed light on the range of Alexander texts circulating across Europe from late Antiquity onward, yet much work remains to be done on the medieval knowledge of classical histories of the conqueror.¹³ It is further problematic that Alexander legends dominate scholarly attention to his legacy, despite recent advances into our understanding of historiographical treatments of his career.¹⁴ The oversight that I seek to redress, especially in this golden age of Alexander scholarship, is the continued focus on the Continental attitudes towards the conqueror to the neglect of his unique reception in England. Studies of the French Alexander tradition have been particularly illuminating for tracing the evolution of romance, but Alexander's reputation inspired a considerable literary corpus across the Channel as well, one that appropriated classical histories of the conqueror to provide an alternative to such legendary tales. Gerrit H. V. Bunt's invaluable survey of Alexander's presence in medieval British literature has shown, in fact, that Insular writers treated the conqueror in the variety of genres outlined by Cary: Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances (the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, *Kyng Alisaunder*, and three alliterative romances in verse, as well as the *Prose Life of Alexander* and Scottish romances), historical, philosophical, and moral compendia, travel and didactic literature, and the canonical works of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate.¹⁵ The present book does not deny the importance of these texts but sheds light on a corpus of significantly influential literature that has remained

¹³ See especially Stoneman, *The Greek Alexander Romance*, pp. 28–32; Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend*; Stoneman, 'The Latin Alexander'; and Stoneman, 'The Medieval Alexander'. The most recent surveys of the medieval Alexander are Cölln, ed., *Alexanderdichtungen im Mittelalter*; and Zuwiyya, ed., *A Companion to Alexander Literature*.

¹⁴ These advances are most recently evident in Gaullier-Bougassas, ed., *L'Historiographie médiévale d'Alexandre*.

¹⁵ Bunt, *Alexander the Great in the Literature of Medieval Britain*. For a more recent survey of Alexander in medieval Britain, see Ashurst, 'Alexander Literature in English and Scots'.

underappreciated in even the most important studies of Alexander, including the pioneering work of Paul Meyer and Cary and this recent study by Bunt.¹⁶

Classical sources on Alexander were also transmitted widely in England, and they competed with and often surpassed in influence the aforementioned narratives. It is certainly true that many in medieval England recognized and were entertained by Alexander as an audacious adventurer who challenged the mighty Persian Empire, fought monsters in India, and even constructed a flying machine to explore the skies.¹⁷ As the poet of *Kyng Alisaunder*, the earliest surviving Middle English Alexander romance, announces at the beginning of his work:

Now, pes! listneþ, and leteþ cheste —
 3ee shullen heren noble geste,
 Of Alisaundre, þe rich[e k]yng,
 Þat dude by his mais[te]res teching,
 And ouercom, so J finde,
 Darrye of Perce and P[o]re of Ynde,
 And many opere, wi3th and hende,
 Jn to þe est werldes ende;
 And þe wondres of worme and beest —
 Deliciouse it is to ylest.¹⁸

However popular this manifestation of Alexander was, he was not simply a figure of entertainment in medieval England. He represented a historical conqueror whose empire extended to three continents, who was taught by one of the most influential thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition, and whose career dictated the political landscape of the ancient world for centuries. Alexander was a historical figure of extraordinary significance, an individual whose story was told in multiple genres from multiple perspectives. As such, he inspired a prolonged and tedious investigation into the historical reality of his career and character, and these investigations were undertaken nowhere more than in England.

In Part One, ‘English Monasticism and the Latin Alexander’, I trace the origins of this inquiry into the historical Alexander to the unedited BL, MS

¹⁶ The monumental assessment of Alexander in French and Anglo-Norman literature remains Meyer, *Alexandre le Grand dans la littérature française*.

¹⁷ For a survey of the legend of Alexander’s flight, see Schmidt, *A Legend and its Image: The Aerial Flight of Alexander*.

¹⁸ *Kyng Alisaunder*, ed. by Smithers.

Royal, 13. A. 1, for it represents the oldest surviving evidence of an explicit dissatisfaction with romances and an attack on their credibility. As assessed by this manuscript's second scribe, there were two types of Alexander narratives: the 'true history' of the 'historiographers' to whom he adheres and the authors and scribes of apocryphal tales, the collective impetus behind so many misconceptions regarding the conqueror. Within roughly seventy five years after the late-eleventh-century BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, the recovery of the historical Alexander reached a watershed moment in the Benedictine transmission of the *Philippic Histories*, the first of the five classical histories to wield a genuine influence in medieval England. In a century plagued by the political upheavals and uncertainty of the Normans and Angevins, understanding Alexander's tyrannical character and the inability of his successors to maintain his empire because of their destructive ambition clearly became a fashionable reflection of the times. In times of political instability, the failure of Alexander and his backbiting successors offered a dire precedent for those who truly believed that history repeats itself, as well as for those who recognized that the history of Macedon, in particular, presented a model of both unrivalled militaristic expansion and a shocking collapse amidst the animosity of officers ill-prepared to succeed their famed leader. In the middle of the Nineteen-Year Anarchy, Ralph Gubium, abbot of St Albans, produced the first compendium of classical sources on the history of the Macedonian Empire; the result was not only an alternative to romance but also a shocking record of an empire and its most famous ruler corrupted by power and greed. Neither heroics nor cause for celebration appeared in this so-called *St Albans Compilation*, and throughout the twelfth century, as the *Philippic Histories* defined Alexander for many writers in England, the conqueror and his empire represented an execrable period in ancient history. This condemnation was not because Alexander was a pagan but because the first Roman histories to reach medieval England emphasized his worst qualities and most egregious behaviour.

While the *Philippic Histories* long remained the authority on ancient Macedon, this monastic criticism of Alexander established the search for other classical histories of his career, and in the thirteenth century, with the rise of scholasticism at Oxford and Paris and the translation of Aristotle into Latin, this criticism encountered its own voices of dissent. As I argue in Part Two, 'Alexander and the Education of Kings', the scholastics ensured that another 'classical' text altered the course of the conqueror's political legacy, the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*. Translated into Latin by Roger Bacon in the late thirteenth century and translated and adapted in turn into countless tracts on proper government, it promised the same elite education that was the 'secret'

to Alexander's success: through Aristotle's teaching, Alexander conquered much of the known world, and those who read the philosopher's supposed manual of kingship could then imitate Alexander's accomplishments. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, writers maintained the wishful comparison of English kings to history's most famous ruler to conjure up notions of a boundless empire stretching in all directions and of victory over evil, but as Richard II's reign drew to a close, this analogy became a less viable option. The faith in Alexander's education and the insistence that he was an ideal ruler remained popular, that is, until John Gower became the predominant dissenting voice in the later fourteenth century and developed his own warnings over the conqueror's failure to secure a long-lasting empire. Gower both advised against following in Alexander's footsteps and argued that rationality, wisdom, and especially self-control informed good rule, with the implication, of course, that Alexander possessed none of these qualities.

Finally, in the book-collecting efforts of Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester, and the advent of humanism in fifteenth-century England, the remaining classical histories of Alexander became increasingly available in the printing age. Part Three, 'English Humanism and the Greek Alexander', argues that early English patrons of humanism took such an interest in importing Latin translations of Greek classical sources of Alexander, particularly Plutarch's biography of him in the *Parallel Lives*, that a new version of the conqueror arose that still forms the basis for debates over his legacy. As the first Greek Alexander text to enjoy a broad readership in England and one that C. S. Lewis argues 'built the heroic ideal of the Elizabethan age',¹⁹ Plutarch's study of the conqueror became the most popular vehicle of the high regard in which both early humanists and their sixteenth-century successors held Alexander. Although he admits several of his subject's vices, Plutarch believes in Alexander's innate nobility and presents him as an ideal, enlightened ruler, and although a Greek-speaker, he wrote in an era of second-century Roman imperialism, the golden age of the empire's fascination with its Macedonian predecessor, when emperors like Trajan not only dreamt of emulating Alexander but even believed that the Roman Empire was in the process of doing so.²⁰ By promoting Plutarch and seeking Greek sources on the Macedonian Empire, humanist scholars and book collectors inspired the revival of the classical Alexander in early modern England. Between 1553, when John Brende's translation of Curtius Rufus was published, to Philemon

¹⁹ Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 305.

²⁰ Bosworth, 'Arrian, Alexander, and the Pursuit of Glory', p. 447.

Holland's dedication to James I of Plutarch's *Moralia* (including the essay, *On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander the Great*) in 1603, the classical Latin and Greek corpus of Alexander histories was widely available to a reading public for the first time since Antiquity.

Throughout these intellectual movements and the resultant debates over Alexander's tyranny or idealized kingship, BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 passed from its origins in a monastic scriptorium after the Norman Conquest to Welsh and English humanists in the sixteenth century to James I and the royal library in the seventeenth century. From its curious frontispiece portrait of Alexander to its refutation of romances of his career, this manuscript has much to tell us about Alexander's evolving reception in post-Conquest England: how his kingship and empire were envisioned, how legendary tales had already transformed his legacy, and how classical historiography was about to change it again. BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 locates 'Alexander the Great' at the crossroads of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman England, when both new attitudes towards the ancient conqueror and new sources on his career were beginning to circulate, and by its transference to humanist scholars and bibliophiles and ultimately James I and Prince Henry, this manuscript reflects a fascinating intellectual and cultural history of transitional attitudes towards Alexander. Along this timeline of the manuscript's production and ownership, Alexander's stature in medieval England changed dramatically, from that of a war-mongering pagan tyrant to the idealized representation of enlightened kingship. I thus begin my study by reading BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 not only for its own merits but also as a barometer of this shifting reception, from the condemnation to the celebration of Alexander, and the times in which such an extraordinary transformation occurred.

Part One

English Monasticism and the Latin Alexander

LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY, MS ROYAL, 13. A. I: CONTEXTS IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, generally dated to the last quarter of the eleventh century,¹ survives incomplete in ninety-eight folios of text, the work of two scribes, and a frontispiece line drawing portrait of Alexander. The first scribe, writing in a neat Caroline miniscule, contributed the *Valerius Epitome*, a Latin descendant of Greek romance,² the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, the conqueror's supposed letter to his famed tutor on the wonders of India, and an *Epitaphium Alexandri* in verse and prose.³ In a smaller, more compact hand, the second scribe first added to the manuscript another popular (yet, unlike the previous two, unflattering) text known as the *Collatio cum Dindimo*, the purported correspondence between Alexander and the Indian philosopher Dindimus, whose views on earthly wealth and power accorded with both Stoic and Christian condemnations of the conqueror. However, this scribe's second addition is the text that so distinguishes this otherwise traditional 'Alexander book' and represents the beginning of a long counter-

¹ See, e.g., Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, p. 83; Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 339; and Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England*, p. 119.

² The *Valerius Epitome* is also known as the *Zacher Epitome*, after Julius Zacher, who discovered and edited it (*Julii Valerii epitome*, ed. by Zacher).

³ These are the earliest surviving Latin examples of all three texts in England, although the Old English translation of the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem* in the *Beowulf*-manuscript predates this copy by perhaps a century or more.

argument against Alexander romance in England by means of ancient authorities.⁴ This Anglo-Latin text, the *Parva recapitulatio de eodem Alexandro et de suis* (*A Brief Summary of the Same Alexander and his Men*), serves as both an addendum and corrigendum for the manuscript's earlier romance narratives, particularly the Valerius *Epitome*, by affirming that 'uera hystoria' ('true history') and credible 'hystoriographi' ('historiographers') — identified by textual interpolations as Orosius and Josephus Flavius — oppose some of the central claims of works like the Valerius *Epitome*, including the circumstances of Alexander's birth and the fate of his empire after his death. That the redactor of the *Parva recapitulatio* relies on Judeo-Christian authorities is not surprising, for the manuscript is surely the product of a monastic scriptorium, and its first three texts and the two sources of the *Parva recapitulatio* all circulated widely in pre- and post-Conquest England.

The specific identity of this scriptorium remains, however, undetermined. According to British Library records, the first scribe's hand shows an affinity with that of Cambridge, Clare College, MS 30 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 23, both Worcester books,⁵ and as the library there had grown quickly in the last thirty years of the eleventh century,⁶ it is certainly a possible candidate for producing BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1. R. M. Thomson has recently noted, however, that the books surviving from Worcester Cathedral Library have 'hardly any decoration worthy of the name',⁷ and, as discussed below, the manuscript's drawing and decoration are important features of its production. A list of other possible scriptoria is, at any rate, relatively short. Drawing from N. R. Ker's list of eight cathedrals, five Benedictine abbeys, and two Augustinian houses as the primary book centres in the century after the Conquest, only a few remain viable options for the production of BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1.⁸ Worcester, St Augustine's and Christ Church, Canterbury, and Bury St Edmunds sit on the earlier end of this timeline,⁹ and of these, the last

⁴ The text of the *Parva recapitulatio* ends mid-sentence on fol. 98^v, yet six other copies survive. See below, Chapter 2, p. 65, n. 35.

⁵ *The British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts* <<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/welcome.htm>>.

⁶ Kauffmann, *Biblical Imagery in Medieval England*, p. 73.

⁷ Thomson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts in Worcester Cathedral Library*, p. xix.

⁸ Ker, *English Manuscripts in the Century after the Norman Conquest*, p. 4.

⁹ Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England*, p. 11. Bishop, *English Caroline*

did not likely feature a scriptorium until the mid eleventh century and looked to the Canterbury houses for exemplars.¹⁰ Indeed, Canterbury has been a natural proposal for the manuscript's origin,¹¹ and the careful production of the original, first book of the Royal manuscript (the first scribe concludes his last item, the *Epitaphium Alexandri*, with the statement, 'Finit liber') is evident throughout and suggestive of the houses there that dominated manuscript production in the late eleventh and early twelfth century.

The drawing that begins the manuscript, the fifty 'kapitula' that precede the Valerius *Epitome*, and the green and red initials with foliate decoration¹² all suggest that this original 'Alexander book' was intended for presentation or, at the very least, was executed with considerable attention to detail. The addenda, which survive on fols 78^v–98^v, lack, however, this level of aesthetic attention: the smaller, more hurried hand of the second scribe, the frequency of built-up initials with a more subdued decoration, and, of course, the rejection of the earlier texts' veracity by the last item (the *Parva recapitulatio*) reveal a change in both scribal and intellectual agenda. Simply put, the work of the first scribe praises Alexander via traditional Latin romance narratives, while that of the second scribe criticizes the conqueror with Christian arguments, including those in the *Collatio cum Dindimo* and Orosius's *Historiae adversum paganos*, the primary source for the *Parva recapitulatio*. There is no reason, however, to date the two scribes to different centuries (for which there are precedents among English manuscripts of the time),¹³ and indeed the pre-Conquest style of the frontispiece drawing and the traditional nature of the manuscript's texts and sources attest to its status, as argued below, as an Alexander codex of Anglo-Saxon England. Still, BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I is no relic to be dismissed because of such conventional aspects. Rather, the pioneering efforts of the *Parva recapitulatio* to distinguish a schema of Alexander texts, those representative of 'true history' and those based on falsehoods, anticipates both the

Minuscule, p. xv, adds that only seven scriptoria produced half of the surviving examples of manuscripts written in English Caroline, a number that includes over a hundred from the Canterbury houses and thirty from Worcester.

¹⁰ Thomson, 'The Library of Bury St Edmunds', pp. 622, 632.

¹¹ Rice, *English Art 871–1100*, p. 207. For possible links between the manuscript's last item and St Augustine's, Canterbury, see below, Chapter 2, p. 64.

¹² Some initials are also decorated with purple and blue.

¹³ Most famously in the *Beowulf*-manuscript, as surveyed by Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf*, pp. 19–21.

historiographical investigations of the twelfth-century Renaissance and the *ad fontes* methodology of its humanist owners in the sixteenth century.

If the origins of BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 remain obscure, the inscribed names of its three owners and the marginal notes by Patrick Young, who recorded the manuscript in the catalogue of 1609 upon Prince Henry's acquisition of the Lumley library, shed considerable light on its sixteenth-century provenance and its appeal for humanist scholars and book collectors.¹⁴ The first two owners, one 'John ap David' and Humphrey Llwyd, celebrated by a contemporary as 'the most famous *Antiquarius* of all our countrey',¹⁵ prove that the manuscript appealed to Welsh humanists, and although the identity of this first individual can only be surmised as the well-travelled and well-educated participant in historiographical debates John Davies (also known as John David, Joan Dayfdd Rhys, and Siôn Dafydd Rhys), the manuscript's second owner and fellow Oxford man Humphrey Llwyd lends it a fascinating history among Tudor intellectual circles. The library ultimately incorporated by Prince Henry into the collection at St James' Palace began with Thomas Cranmer and, upon Mary's accession, passed to the Earl of Arundel, who later gave the majority of his books to his son-in-law John Lumley in the late 1550s.¹⁶ The only known Alexander text in Cranmer's library was, however, Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories*,¹⁷ and BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 came to the Lumley collection from Llwyd, who served as Arundel's physician and library advisor and later married Lumley's sister. The introduction of Llwyd to Lumley has been described as Arundel's 'last significant contribution to the growth of the library', and indeed some seventy surviving books, including the Royal manuscript, bear the names of both brothers-in-law.¹⁸

Between Llwyd's acquisition of the manuscript in the 1550s and Lumley's death in 1609,¹⁹ they collected the works of every major classical historian of

¹⁴ 'Jo[h]n ap D[avi]d' is inscribed on fol. 2^r; for his identity, see below, Chapter 7, pp. 214–17. On the same folio appears John Lumley's name, and that of Humphrey Llwyd is written on fol. 5^r.

¹⁵ William Salesbury, cited in Davies, 'Latin Literature', p. 69.

¹⁶ Jayne and Johnson, eds, *The Lumley Library: The Catalogue of 1609*, p. 3.

¹⁷ Selwyn, *The Library of Thomas Cranmer*, lists three printed copies: items 376 (Paris, 1519), 377, and 377. 1 (two copies from Basel, 1539).

¹⁸ Jayne and Johnson, eds, *The Lumley Library: The Catalogue of 1609*, p. 6.

¹⁹ The exact date is unclear, but the decade is apparent from the identifying note on fol. 5^r: 'Sum Humfredi Lloyd 155', with the last digit cut off in binding.

Alexander and his empire still read today (the Latin texts of Curtius Rufus and Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories* and the Greek texts of Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, and Arrian). BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, with its popular medieval romances of Alexander and the earliest surviving attempt to refute their veracity, sits, then, in remarkable company by an equally remarkable twist of fate, if Llwyd indeed obtained it from a man in John ap David who 'by the generality [...] being not understood, his rare parts and curious Learning was in a manner buried where he lived'.²⁰ The Lumley collection of Alexander texts represents the culmination of several centuries' worth of monastic, scholastic, and humanist investigations into ancient Macedon and the recovery of Latin and Greek sources on the conqueror, yet this process began with the simple assertion of the *Parva recapitulatio* in the Royal manuscript: two traditions of Alexander 'history' exist, and while one promulgates fanciful misconceptions about his life, the other both corrects its counterpart and offers a broader understanding of the legacy of Alexander and his empire.

Alexander in Anglo-Saxon England: Explorer and Tyrant

Throughout Anglo-Saxon England — in the centuries leading up to, that is, the *Parva recapitulatio* and its re-evaluation of Macedonian history — an impressive corpus of Alexander narratives, and with them a unique Insular concern over Alexander's legacy, circulated. Both Latin and vernacular texts and both histories and romances of Alexander were known in England before the Conquest, and although these texts are the products of disparate literary tastes, they share a rather critical attitude towards their subject. Alexander romances of the time are generally concerned with Eastern marvels, while histories are informed by Christian anxieties over the conqueror's tyrannical nature; both present, however, a less than ideal portrait of a short-lived, temperamental ruler. There is even an instance of romance and history intersecting in the unlikeliest of places. Although BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I is the oldest surviving copy of English origin of the Valerius *Epitome* (and no translation survives), the salacious story of Nectanabus, the pharaoh-sorcerer who fathered Alexander, appears, for example, in the Old English version of Orosius's *Historiae adversum paganos*, a text that admits nothing of romance but conveys an excess of criticism. In this translation, Alexander is identified not as the son of Philip but of the 'drys'

²⁰ So Wood, *Athenae Oxoniensis*, comments on John David (quoted by Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England*, p. 330, n. 62).

(‘the sorcerer’) Nectanabus.²¹ The very history used in the Royal manuscript’s *Parva recapitulatio* to combat the authority of romance had already been contaminated, then, by one of its most sensational assertions.

Given the widespread transmission of romances, this is hardly surprising. The *Epitome* was only written in the ninth century (and would have been a recent text for the translators of Orosius), but it stems from a long tradition of Latin and Greek romances that circulated throughout Europe and glorified the conqueror.²² Of these, no text wielded so profound an influence as that of the *Epitome*’s companion text in several medieval manuscripts.²³ The *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem* and its account of Alexander’s expeditions within India established his role as a monster-slayer and peerless explorer and undoubtedly made him even more appealing to Anglo-Saxon audiences, whose taste for tales of marvels has been well documented.²⁴ In the *Liber monstrorum*, which borrowed several of its depictions from Alexander’s letter to Aristotle, the conqueror is consistently portrayed, for example, as a combatant against monsters more than a military commander, and one so recognizable that he needs only an adjective of nationality, ‘Macedo’ (‘the Macedonian’), for identification.²⁵ Indeed, this aspect of Alexander characterizes the earliest English drawing of him on record, that found in BL, MS Cotton Tiberius B. v, an eleventh-century copy of the Latin *Wonders of the East* produced not long before BL, MS Royal,

²¹ *The Old English Orosius*, ed. by Bately, 3. 9: when Alexander visits the temple of Siwah in Egypt in order to assert himself as the son of Jupiter Ammon, the translator adds that he also meant to purge the story that Olympias had committed adultery and that Alexander was, then, the son of Nectanabus (‘[Alexander] wolde beladian his modor Nectanebuses þæs drys, þe mon sæde þæt heo hie wið forlæge 7 þæt he Alexandres fæder wære’).

²² These romances, or at least the heroic view that they propagated, may account for the oldest surviving reference to Alexander in the English language, in *Widsith*, ed. by Malone, chs 15–16, which identifies Alexander as ‘Alexandreas ealra ricost | monna cynnes’ (‘the most powerful of all mankind’). *Old English Minor Heroic Poems*, ed. by Hill, p. 78 casts doubt, however, on Alexander as the poet’s intended reference.

²³ For a list of manuscripts with both texts, see Ross, ‘A Check-List of Manuscripts of Three Alexander Texts’.

²⁴ See Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf*, pp. 24–39; and Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 116–39 for a discussion of Alexander texts and contemporary accounts of monsters in Anglo-Saxon England. Five narratives in Anglo-Saxon England perpetuated this reception of Alexander: the Latin and Old English *Wonders of the East*, the Anglo-Latin *Liber monstrorum*, the *Epistola ad Aristotelem*, and its own Old English translation in the *Beowulf*-manuscript.

²⁵ Edited and translated in the appendix of Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 255–317. For the references to Alexander, see pp. 290, 292, 296, 300, 302, 308, and 310.



Figure 1.
'Alexander the Great
in the East', BL, MS
Cotton Tiberius B. v,
fol. 85^v. Early eleventh
century. © The British
Library Board

13. A. I.²⁶ Here, the artist depicts Alexander not only as an explorer and cataloguer, but also as both king and conqueror, and while he interviews the aged men peacefully and inquisitively, his crown and sword appear as unmistakable tokens of his authority. With the one he is capable of playing the mild-mannered king, and with the other he is capable of alarming violence. The accompanying text relates, in fact, that Alexander is impressed by these elders' culture and wishes to do them no harm, whereas in a passage just before this meeting, he kills a race of beastly women because he finds them offensive.²⁷

²⁶ Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066*, p. 104 dates this manuscript to the second quarter of the eleventh century.

²⁷ BL, MS Cotton Tiberius B. v, fol. 85^v: 'Alexander autem Macedo cum ad eos uenisset miratus est eorum humanitatem nec uoluit eis nocere nec ultra uoluit occidere' ('However,

The most compelling presentation of Alexander in this role of explorer-king occurs, however, in the *Beowulf*-manuscript (produced perhaps just under a century before BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1), which features both the Old English translation of the letter to Aristotle, the oldest such vernacular rendering, and the *Wonders of the East*. The first of these texts attracted, and must have appeared as amenable to, criticism of the conqueror. The Old English version presents him as desperate for perpetual fame and abruptly concludes before Alexander can erect memorials to his accomplishments in India, the easternmost part of his empire. Rather, he hears prophecies of his impending death and admits to Aristotle that he is more disheartened by the premature end to opportunities for glory than to his life. Still, as Alexander explains to his former tutor, he finds solace and a sense of memorial in the very act of writing:

And to me the swift ending of my life was not so much pain as the fact that I had achieved less glory than I would have wished. I write these things to you, my beloved teacher, that you first can rejoice in the success of my life, and exult in the honours. And also my memory shall forever stand and tower as an example for other earthly kings, so that they know the more readily that my power and my honour were greater than those of all the other kings who have ever lived in the world.²⁸

The desire for tangible memorials plays a role in the *Wonders of the East* as well, but in both the Latin and Old English texts the monuments appear simply as geographical landmarks — near Archemedon ‘ibi sunt illa magna insignia quae magnus Alexander operari iusserat’ (‘there are those great monuments which Alexander the Great ordered to be built’).²⁹ The factual, blunt language of this statement precludes any insight into Alexander’s melancholy, while the Old English letter to Aristotle depicts a conqueror who senses the end of his empire but takes consolation in the glory that will perpetuate his name. Such a portrayal of Alexander is naturally at home in a codex with *Beowulf*, which relies on these sentiments of impending death, memorial building, and the rejuvenating powers of fame to narrate its hero’s last days as well. However, Alexander’s

when Alexander the Macedonian had come upon these men, he marvelled at their culture and wished neither to do them harm nor kill them’).

²⁸ Translated by Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 253. Moreover, associations between this ending to (and indeed the tone of) the *Epistola* and that of *Beowulf* have merited the argument that the two texts were intentionally paired in BL, MS Cotton Vitellius A. xv; see Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf*, pp. 35–39.

²⁹ Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 175. Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 184 reads: ‘þær syndan þa mycclan mærdæ þæt syndan ða geweorc þe se miccla macedonisca Alexander het gewyrcean’.

association with Beowulf runs deeper than their mutual plans to build monuments to their achievements. In BL, MS Cotton Vitellius A. xv, the thematic similarities between these plans are unmistakable: both men desire a memorial that succeeding generations will recognize in awe, but both men's legacies are undermined by omens of devastation. Within a century of the *Beowulf* manuscript, BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I would expound on the miseries of Macedonian history: as Beowulf's men abandon him and give rise to fears of foreign invasion and the end of a kingdom, so Alexander's men dismember his empire in their animosity and ambition after his death.

These narratives of exploration and marvels did not offer, however, the only representation of Alexander before the Conquest, and the attacks on his character that appear in the Royal manuscript have their own predecessors in the philosophical tracts that also circulated in Anglo-Saxon England.³⁰ These texts, including the testy correspondence between Alexander and the Brahman philosopher Dindimus known as the *Collatio cum Dindimo* (the third item in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I) represent an opposing view of the conqueror's Eastern campaigns and indeed condemn the martial behaviour of the aforementioned epistolary, monster-centric texts. In the eighth century, Alcuin sent Charlemagne, for example, a copy of this debate over conquest and asceticism with the epigram, 'Gens Bragmanna quidem miris quae moribus extat | Hic legitur' ('Here one may read of the Brahmins, who live by wondrous customs').³¹ He apparently did not hold Alexander's own lifestyle in such regard, and his inclusion of the supposed letters between St Paul and Seneca with the *Collatio* suggests that Alcuin, as did most early medieval readers, regarded the correspondence as a Christian condemnation of the Macedonian. Such condemnation survives in Anglo-Saxon biblical exegesis as well. In his *Catholic Homilies*, Aelfric of Eynsham reduces, for example, the nine-verse survey of Alexander's career in 1 Maccabees to a simple statement: 'Alexander se egefulla cyning todaelde his rice his dyrlingum gehwilcum on his forthsithe' ('Alexander the dreadful king

³⁰ In general, this portrayal corresponds with the moralities and allegories that Hildegard Tristram detects in Old English translations of Alexander narratives; see Tristram, 'Der insulare Alexander'; and Tristram, 'More Talk of Alexander'.

³¹ Alcuin, *Opera omnia*, CI, col. 1375. This epigram was edited alone in *Poetae Latini aevi Carolini*, ed. by Dümmler, I, 300. Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 120 identifies another philosophical tract transmitted in Anglo-Saxon England, the *Commonitorium Palladii de Bragmanis* (more of an anthropological than a religious study of the Brahmins), which was sent to Saint-Vaast from Bath in 1070. The manuscript is now Arras, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 1068.

divided his kingdom among those dearest to him').³² There is no corresponding term to this 'egefulla' in the original Maccabean passage, so Aelfric presumably considered the account of Alexander's career therein as one of danger and destruction, and he clearly perceives the conqueror with the eye of a sermonizer feeling contempt for his subject.³³ Even in this briefest of epitaphs, however, Aelfric reveals the nature of the responses towards Alexander in Anglo-Saxon Christian and historical texts.³⁴

The predominant such text, and that which would eventually inform the *Parva recapitulatio*, was Orosius's *Historiae adversum paganos*. In Orosius's assessment, Alexander is no curious explorer but a conqueror bent on destroying others for his own glory, and from India, the site of wonder tales associated with his career, to Western Europe, closer to the readers' Anglo-Saxon world, humanity trembles in fear. The Old English translation of the *Historiae*, extant in four manuscripts from the tenth and eleventh centuries, offers the most critical depiction — even beyond the venom of the original — of Alexander in Anglo-Saxon England.³⁵ Its view of him as a man gluttonous for glory and blood reflects, of course, Orosius's original attitudes towards Alexander, yet the Old English translation amplifies this already excoriating treatment. To the translator, the conqueror's birth marks a dangerous, terrifying period, for 'On þam dagum wæs Alexander geboren on Crecum swa swa an micel yst come ofer ealne middangeard' ('when Alexander was born in Greece, it was as if a whirlwind had come over all of the middle-earth'), an assessment that exceeds Orosius's own, impressive designation of Alexander as 'ille gurgis miseriarum atque atrocissimus turbo totius orientis' ('that whirlpool of miseries and most atrocious whirlwind of the entire East') and that, as will be discussed in the

³² Aelfric, *Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, p. 66. Although Kauffmann, *Biblical Imagery in Medieval England*, p. 37 argues that homilists like Aelfric and Wulfstan reveal their commiseration with the Israelites (and by and large Alexander's legacy in Jewish history was a positive one), his unfavourable reception in the Christian tradition effectively trumps any possibility for admiration for many writers.

³³ Toller, ed., *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 243 defines the adjective as 'fearful' and 'terrible' and cites the latter from the Latin 'terribilis'. Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 102 emends to "awful," inspiring or feeling awe.

³⁴ The same designation of Alexander as 'egeful' appears, for example, in *The Old English Orosius*, ed. by Bately, 3. 9: 'Swa egefull wæs Alexander þa þa he wæs on Indeum, on eastewardum þissum middangeard[e], þætte þa from him ondreðan þe wæron on westewardum' ('so awful was Alexander that when he was in India, in the eastern part of this earth, those in the western part lived in fear of him').

³⁵ See Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 121–25.

following chapter, introduces Alexander in the *Parva recapitulatio*.³⁶ Orosius's Alexander remains throughout his account a destructive force hell-bent on conquest and devoid of pity, so that, upon his death, he is relegated to a pre-Christian era abominable for its bloodshed. Alexander's epitaph consists of nothing more than a statement of due punishment and justified regicide: 'Alexander vero apud Babylonam, cum adhuc sanguinem sitiens male castigata aviditate ministri insidiis venenum potasset, interiit' ('still thirsting for blood, his greed was bitterly punished by the treachery of one of his attendants when he drank poison and died in Babylon').³⁷ Orosius, writing amidst the Goths' encroachment into Rome, both defies the argument that his modern compatriots suffer more than those peoples subjugated by Alexander and forbids his fellow Christians to admire (much less emulate) a man of such extraordinary belligerence. In his history, Alexander is a static and despicable figure, condemnable because of his innate and incessantly violent ambition and his place in pagan history, and this attitude, although neglected by countless Christian kings of the Latin West (many of whom shared a predilection for Alexander romance), deeply informs the debate within BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1.

Within this manuscript, Orosius's text and ideological stance against Alexander are used to counteract the most pervasive medieval vehicle of admiration for the conqueror, the scores of romances that had promoted his heroism and tragic death for centuries. To overcome the influence of such romances, historically minded writers had to tease out the strands of fiction therein and replace them with an alternative narrative interpolated from classical sources on Macedon. In so doing, these writers also transformed Alexander's Insular reception by denying him admiration and sympathy, the cornerstones of Greek and Latin romance. While this involved a tedious process of consulting and interpolating various historical texts, the shift in Alexander's reception begins with the sort of minor textual (but intellectually speaking, enormously important) addition as seen in the Old English translation of the aforementioned Orosian passage on Alexander's death in Babylon. This vernacular version does not simply conclude with the conqueror's desire for bloodshed but uses this desire to explain the reasons behind his assassination:

þagiet þa Alexander ham com to Babylonia, þagiet wæs on him se mæsta þurst monnes blodes. Ac þa þa his geferan ongeatan þæt he ðæs gewinnes þagiet geswican

³⁶ *The Old English Orosius*, ed. by Bately, 3. 7, corresponding to the original (Latin) Orosius, *Historiarum adversum paganos*, ed. by Zangemeister, 3. 7.

³⁷ Orosius, *Historiarum adversum paganos*, ed. by Zangemeister, 3. 20.

molde, ac he sæde þæt he on African faran wolde, þa geleornedon his byrelas him
 betweonum hu hie him mehten þæt lif oþþringan, 7 him gesealdon ator drincan.
 þa forlet he his lif.

Yet when Alexander came home to Babylon, there was still within him a great thirst
 for human blood. And when his companions learned that he did not wish to end
 his campaigns but had said that he would march on Africa, his cupbearers consid-
 ered amongst themselves how they might murder him, and they gave him poison
 to drink. In such a way he lost his life.³⁸

Conspiracy was no stranger to Alexander narratives (the notion that he died
 of poisoning belonged to a classical tradition), but this passage asserts one that
 even Orosius neglects. Here, the conqueror dies not because that is an even-
 tuality of incessant warfare but because he turns his own men against him.
 Roman writers before Orosius had, in fact, perpetuated this view of Alexander,
 but it did not exert a serious medieval influence until the twelfth century,
 when monastic writers in England disseminated a more in-depth analysis of
 Macedon's political strife. Still, in the manuscripts of the Old English Orosius,
 which curiously acknowledge the Nectanabus tradition (a central claim of
 romance) while offering antagonistic rule as a damning reason for Alexander's
 death (a central claim of Latin histories of Macedon circulating in England),
 the blueprint for rejecting romances is apparent yet remains unfulfilled. That
 would change with the late-eleventh-century BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1.

BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1: The Frontispiece

Although these romances had circulated in England well before the Royal
 manuscript, here they suggestively serve as textual counterparts to its curi-
 ous frontispiece, one of the oldest Insular portrayals of Alexander on record.
 Scholars have neglected, however, this crucial relationship between text and
 image, and although this drawing poses some problems of interpretation, con-
 ceptions both of this specific conqueror and of kingship generally in the late
 eleventh century shed light on its intentions. All five of the texts in the Royal
 manuscript underscore the brevity of Alexander's career and his sudden death
 in Babylon, which were fundamental aspects of the conqueror's reception in

³⁸ *The Old English Orosius*, ed. by Bately, 3. 9. Butturff, 'Style as a Clue to Meaning', p. 86
 associates this 'ignoble death' by treachery with the letter to Aristotle's wistful ending, 'an *exem-
 plum* of the fate of those who put their hopes in the earthly city'.



Figure 2.
'Alexander the
Great Enthroned',
BL, MS Royal,
13. A. I, fol. 1^v. Late
eleventh century.
© The British
Library Board

the late Middle Ages. Alexander's death provoked a keen emotional response for some, and his long-standing heroic status granted his death a tragic prominence within the ranks of pagan protagonists, as seen in a fifteenth-century scribe's addition to a Middle English romance: 'Alisaunder me reowip þyn endyng | þat þou natest dyzed in cristenyng'.³⁹ For others, however, the death

³⁹ These lines are added to the copy of *Kyng Alisaunder* in Lincoln's Inn, MS 150. See *Kyng Alisaunder*, ed. by Smithers, 6745–46.

of a man who waged incessant, global wars offered one of history's most recognizable warnings against both the vagaries of earthly kingship and the dangers of ambition and belligerence. These warnings were clearly on the mind of the redactor of the *Parva recapitulatio*, the last surviving item in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 and the first surviving attempt to distinguish the 'uera hystoria' ('true history') of Alexander's tyrannical nature and the self-inflicted destruction of his empire. This, then, is the textual debate introduced by the manuscript: not only the veracity of one version of history over another, but the implications of this version for Alexander's character, death, and place in history.

However, this debate cannot be excluded from the visual component of the manuscript. As Richard Gameson has argued on the role of frontispieces in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, they 'lead [the reader...] into the book physically, and define it for him conceptually' and aim 'to accompany written texts, to recount familiar stories, to fulfil informed expectations, and to activate easily triggered responses'.⁴⁰ Again, in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, such expectations and responses represent the essential split in Alexander's medieval reception. For the first scribe and those familiar with his texts, the conqueror's career was at once entertaining, praiseworthy, and tragically cautionary, yet for the second scribe and those soon to be familiar with his innovative approach to the Alexander legend, the conqueror's accomplishments were at once instructive, condemnable, and cautionary for altogether different reasons. Not only did Alexander serve as a legible icon of unparalleled military success, but in a Christian setting, he was read allegorically as a figure of human transgression and spectacular fall at the height of his power. Both of these perspectives, one could argue, are identifiable in the portrait that begins the manuscript, and both are crucial to his legend's sustained relevance for countless generations. Since Antiquity, Alexander, his image, and his legacy had been appropriated by rulers mindful of boosting their own legitimacy in building kingdoms and empires, even as those interested in debating the wisdom of emulating history's most famous conqueror scrutinized his career and reputation.

All of these facets of the Alexander legend must be considered in reading the texts of the Royal manuscript and in viewing the frontispiece that introduces them. On the right is portrayed Alexander the conqueror, who sits upon his throne and looks down at the *orbis terrarum* in his left hand, while with his right hand he grasps his sceptre. In his bejewelled crown and decorated robes, he is every bit the successful young monarch, but on the left of the frame stands a female figure, dressed just as elaborately as the king himself, and it is

⁴⁰ Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church*, pp. 30, 137.

she who draws the eye to the single point of contact between the two figures. Near the top of the sceptre that clearly divides the image into equal parts, the woman touches Alexander's hand with a small brush, which Francis Wormald associates with the act of aspersion.⁴¹ The woman does, in fact, hold an *aspergillum* (the brush) in her right hand and an *aspersorium* (the pot) in her left, the implements necessary for baptism by aspersion rather than immersion, for Christian purification,⁴² and for administering last rites by sprinkling the coffin and corpse with holy water before burial.⁴³

As will be discussed below, the first two functions are also reminiscent of coronation *ordines* in the time of this manuscript, but the third accords with the most popular medieval conception of Alexander — a conqueror shockingly killed in the prime of success. As André Grabar has written, the 'essential quality' of late antique portraiture is its typology, and it seems unlikely (extending this stance to medieval portraiture) that so recognizable an object in contemporary art would not retain at least some of the traditional significance of its function.⁴⁴ Indeed, the *aspergillum* is a common motif in images and accounts of burial scenes both before and after BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I. Victoria Thompson describes a rite of visiting the sick and the dying in Anglo-Saxon England as requiring the priest to asperge both patient and house, and one of the oldest surviving English obituary rolls (c. 1230) presents the asperging of the corpse in question.⁴⁵ Such Christian burial rites also appear in illustrations from Alexander romances, which present the king in contemporary fashion rather than as a pagan ruler of Antiquity. One such death scene is depicted in the early-fourteenth-century BL, MS Royal, 20. A. v, a copy (of English origin) of *The Old French Prose Alexander*, wherein Alexander's interment draws

⁴¹ Wormald, *English Drawings of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries*, p. 72. There are admittedly few women in the legendary Alexander narratives, and identifying this figure based purely on them has proven a frustrating task. Ross, *Studies in the Alexander Romance*, p. 163, n. 13, suggests Candace, an Ethiopian queen who entraps Alexander in her bedroom by outwitting his attempts at disguise.

⁴² So Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, I. 30 reports that Gregory the Great instructed missionaries in England to spare pagan temples but to asperse the idols therein. Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, p. 98 explains the *aspergillum* as a tool for purification, both a cleansing from evil and the ability to defeat it.

⁴³ See Sheppy, *Death Liturgy and Ritual*, II, 36.

⁴⁴ Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, p. 63.

⁴⁵ Thompson, *Death and Dying in Later Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 77. Turner and others, eds, *The Benedictines in Britain*, pp. 32–33 discuss the obituary roll, produced for the foundress of a Benedictine nunnery in Essex.



Figure 3.
 'The Burial of Alexander
 the Great', BL, MS Royal
 20. A. v, fol. 83^v. Early
 fourteenth century.
 © The British
 Library Board

a crowd of ecclesiastical officers. Standing in the middle and performing the rites of baptism, a priest employs an *aspersillum* and an *aspersorium* very similar to those in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, yet the parameters of this burial scene remain more defined, for the priest sprinkles the corpse and coffin generally and clearly administers rites to the corpse of a dead king soon to be buried. As for Alexander, only the crown designates his monarchical status; wearing plain garments and possessing neither orb nor sceptre, he remains simple, undorned, and prepared for his final resting place. The author relates, however, that the royal extravagance and pomp of this burial was such that he cannot imagine ('deviser') the scene in his mind.⁴⁶ Moreover, he makes no mention

⁴⁶ BL, MS Royal 20. A. v, fol. 84^r: 'Après si houte le firent enbauser et l'apareillierent si ricement com il afferoit a lui, car il le vestirent de dras roiaus et li mistrent sa corone en sa teste, si le couchierent en .i. char et l'e[m] porterent en Alixandre. Quant il furent la venu, si firent faire sa sepouture si richement et si noblement que a painnes le porroit nus deviser' ('After they had

of the priests and the act of aspersion, so that artistic decision evidently lies with the illustrator, and his conception, as the caption states, of 'Comment on ensevelist le bon roi Alixandre' ('How the good King Alexander was buried') is undoubtedly independent of the text itself.⁴⁷

However, in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, Alexander remains living and on his throne, and the woman does not sprinkle him with water, as does the priest above, but painstakingly applies her brush to his fingers that clutch the sceptre. The implication of this attention to his hand is clear enough, for she devotes her brush to the symbolic source of Alexander's power, but her intention, much less her identity, is not immediately apparent, although the two are surely associated. Philosophy has been suggested, although she traditionally holds a palm and a book (and there is no record of her association with aspersion),⁴⁸ and while twelfth-century drawings survive of Fortune casting down kings at their height of power, and there is even evidence of Fortune's conflation with Death, they do not include the act of aspersion either.⁴⁹ The most popular representation of Philosophy does suggest, however, a source for the *mise-en-scène* and perhaps even the emotional significance of the Alexander portrait. Cambridge, University Library, MS Dd. 6. 6 (c. 1140) depicts Boethius, for example, sitting to the right of the personification and resting his head in a downward glance suggestive of despair.⁵⁰ If Alexander's pose represents a similar frustration —

embalmed him and dressed him so richly as befitted a king (for they dressed him in regal robes and put his crown on his head), then they laid him in a cart and carried him to Alexandria. When they arrived there, his burial was performed so richly and nobly that I can hardly imagine it').

⁴⁷ BL, MS Royal 20. A. v, fol. 83^v. The same implements and action are seen in the burial of Darius (commissioned by Alexander) on fol. 37^r.

⁴⁸ The woman is identified as Philosophy in *The British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*. Ohlgren, *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Illuminated Manuscripts*, nos 108. 1 (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O. 3. 7 — c. 970) and 137. 1 (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS latin 6401 — late tenth century) describes the oldest English drawings of Philosophy in copies of Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*; in both she holds a book and a floriated sceptre. According to Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts*, p. 85, these were conventional attributes of the scene, dating to tenth-century German manuscripts.

⁴⁹ Pickering, *Literature and Art in the Middle Ages*, pl. 2a, offers a French or English drawing of Fortune's victory over kings (in which she, enthroned, holds her sword with her left hand while cranking her iconographic wheel with her right). Patch, *The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature*, pp. 117–19 traces the association of Fortuna and Death to late Antiquity. Camille, *Master of Death: The Lifeless Art of Pierre Remiet*, p. 136 further clarifies this association in the feminine gender of both *fortuna* and *mors*.

⁵⁰ See Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts*, cat. 50.

if, that is, he sits in need of consolation — then the intention of the portrait changes entirely. The young ruler expanded Macedon at an astonishing rate, but before he could secure plans for the future stability of his empire, he died suddenly, both away from home and with new conquests still on his mind. He was, particularly from the perspective of romance, a man who quickly won much of the known and unknown world but lost it in a matter of moments. At the same time, countless kings emulated Alexander and invoked his reign, despite the widespread knowledge of his collapse, as a paradigm of successful rule, until a sweeping counter-tradition of explicating Macedonian history made such attitudes impractical. While BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 sits at the head of this counter-tradition, Alexander still appealed to the royal imagination, so to speak, in the eleventh century, and he was readily compared for better or worse to monarchs past and present. If, then, the woman and her intentions for Alexander remain ambiguous, the imperial context of the scene does not. The conqueror sits enthroned and in possession of the symbols of authority, and the most effective means of reading the portrait is through a consideration of contemporary visual treatments of power and the textual treatment of Alexander's own career in the manuscript itself.

First and foremost, it recalls the Anglo-Saxon style of illumination after the adaptation of 'Carolingian art with its Mediterranean heritage'.⁵¹ The green robes of Alexander and the woman to his left recall, for example, a traditional royal colour for depicting Anglo-Saxon kings, while his sceptre, topped with the fleur-de-lis, represents a symbol of royal power appropriated in England from Charles the Bald and Carolingian kings.⁵² Moreover, Byzantine motifs, including the cushioned architectural throne on which Alexander sits and the orb that he holds, had appeared in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts for centuries through Carolingian and Ottonian intermediaries. Although there are stylistic analogues for some attributes of the drawing in the Royal manuscript, it incorporates each of these Continental influences to convey particular notions of kingship and imperial power in the late eleventh century.⁵³ Like the texts that

⁵¹ Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066*, p. 24.

⁵² Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 31–32.

⁵³ Wormald, *English Drawings of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries*, pp. 56–57 identifies, for example, a Worcester drawing of David in Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 319 (1064–92) as both pre-Conquest (particularly the 'flying drapery of the king's cloak') and one that on the whole anticipates the twelfth-century style. The ornamental aspects of the curtains, draperies, and border aside, the figure itself, with the hems on its robes, striped leggings, and the cushioned architectural throne on which it sits, shows affinities with the drawing of Alexander.

follow it, the portrait contextualizes Alexander in both traditional and modern manners, and as a result, the Royal manuscript represents a treatment of the conqueror from Anglo-Saxon and post-Conquest perspectives alike.

Alexander and Royal and Imperial Portraiture in the Eleventh Century

Canterbury, whose centres of book production had the means to produce the texts of the Royal manuscript and dominated English illumination between 1070 and 1120, offers particularly valuable clues to understanding the artistic contexts of this image of Alexander.⁵⁴ The next surviving English portrait of Alexander after the Royal manuscript is found, for example, in the Dover Bible (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 4, fol. 139^v), which dates to c. 1150 and is attributed to artists at Christ Church, Canterbury.⁵⁵ Although it was produced well after the Royal manuscript, this bible reveals the same reliance on Continental (and in this case, ultimately Byzantine) representations of kingship. Within the drawing's textual context of 1 Maccabees, the conqueror stands between praise and criticism, and the passage portrays him in a relative fashion. 'Constituit proelia multa et omnium obtinuit munitiones et interfecit reges terrae' ('He fought many battles, and took the strongholds of all, and slew the kings of the earth'), but his primary enemy remained the Persians, and in defeating them, Alexander gained an elevated stature in Jewish historiography, as will be seen in the last text of BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I.⁵⁶ In the larger context of medieval royal portraiture, however, the drawing attests to the iconographic patterns that had travelled westward through Europe to inform English art. As noted by C. R. Dodwell, the drawing finds its ultimate source in Byzantine coronation scenes, in which Christ stands in Alexander's central position and crowns the other two figures (typically an emperor with his son or wife).⁵⁷ However, Ottonian emperors, whose considerable influence on Insular representations of kingship is also apparent in the Royal manuscript, appropriated this scene and presumably provided an intermediate model for the artists of the Dover Bible.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts*, p. 13.

⁵⁵ Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts*, cat. 69.

⁵⁶ 1 Maccabees 1. 2 (Douay-Rheims).

⁵⁷ Dodwell, *The Canterbury School of Illumination*, p. 86. The drawing in the Dover Bible may simply follow these older patterns of the emperor on the left and his wife on the right, but in a historical context, which was well known in the twelfth century, Alexander was survived by his wife and his mother Olympias. Both were killed in the Macedonian civil wars.

⁵⁸ Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 9–10, discusses the influence of



Figure 4. 'Alexander the Great Dividing his Kingdom', Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 4, fol. 139^r. c. 1150. Reproduced with permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge

The unique decision in this English drawing lies in the prominence granted to Alexander. Rather than celebrating the divine conferral of authority to a Christian ruler, the scene represents the second point of the Maccabean survey of him, one that conveys a brief but extraordinary career and a massive shift in power, first with Alexander's victory over the East and then with his successors' division of his empire. Indeed, for many medieval chroniclers this division dictated Alexander's reception as much as his conquests, and the Dover Bible drawing attests to one of Alexander's truly iconographic moments, the most influential death followed by the most influential will in Antiquity. For all of his successful campaigns in the East, Alexander never stopped his war machine, and he certainly never ruled his empire for any period of time. That task fell to

Byzantine and Ottonian coronation scenes on Anglo-Saxon art.

his survivors, and it was their respective realms, of course, that would usher the classical world towards Hellenism and Roman dominion. In the century before the Dover Bible, the texts of the Royal manuscript showcase the first step in asserting this historical view over the myopic one of Alexander romances concerned only with his career and neglectful of its aftermath, but its frontispiece certainly does not suggest this transfer of Alexander's empire to his successors. This earlier portrait rather focuses on Alexander as a ruler still in possession of that empire, yet it anticipates the influences behind the Dover biblical illustration, for in the Royal manuscript the conqueror is already portrayed and read in a comparative fashion with Byzantine and Ottonian emperors and ultimately Anglo-Saxon kings who harboured visions of imperial grandeur.

As recently studied by Catherine Karkov, the few portraits of Anglo-Saxon kings are, in fact, based on Continental formulae (several of which inform the portrait of Alexander), but the Anglo-Saxons' own motifs in representing kings consist of books and other implements of 'learning, wisdom and devotion'.⁵⁹ Devotion informs, for example, another Canterbury drawing, that in BL, MS Cotton Tiberius A. IIII (c. 1050) of King Edgar holding a palm frond and seated between Saints Dunstan and Ethelwold, all of whom are portrayed above a monk kneeling at the bottom of the panel.⁶⁰ While this drawing shows some affinities with the Alexander portrait in terms of royal dress, it also reveals how a mid-eleventh-century portrayal of Christian Anglo-Saxon kingship drastically differs from that of a pagan ruler in the Royal manuscript towards the end of the century. The image of Edgar surrounded by saints and a monk represents one paradigm of ecclesiastically sanctioned kingship that influenced English portraiture up to and beyond the drawing of Alexander, including a third Canterbury portrait of an anonymous king. Although the text of the *Ramsey Benedictional* in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS latin 987 dates to the late tenth century, an unknown artist in the first quarter of the twelfth century added a drawing of a king receiving the blessing of church figures.⁶¹ Here, the king holds a banner and a sceptre and sits enthroned between two ecclesiastics, while musicians appear below, a scene whose 'general iconography', C. R. Dodwell comments, 'recalls the early consular diptychs and has probably been

⁵⁹ Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 6.

⁶⁰ Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066*, cat. 100 provides a detailed description of the portrait (reproduced as fig. 313).

⁶¹ Dodwell, *Pictorial Arts of the West*, p. 121.

inspired by Carolingian art'.⁶² The drawing of Alexander in the Royal manuscript is equally informed by Roman and Byzantine diptychs and Carolingian and Ottonian imperial presentations, yet it lacks the definitive quality of the drawing in the *Benedictional* and the examples of medieval royal portraiture that belong to the aforementioned ecclesiastical paradigm.

The drawing of Alexander ultimately lacks, that is, this paradigm's most important quality in depicting Christian kingship, the explicit role of the church and clerical and even heavenly figures. Still, Byzantine, Carolingian, and Ottonian images of imperial Christian authority offer the best interpretation for the two figures in the drawing, Alexander and the woman to his right. In the century before BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, the Ottonians had significantly changed the agenda of imperial portraiture, and through the appropriation of such Byzantine motifs as orbs, representative of the earthly realm, and personified provinces, representative of the geographical scope of that realm, the line of emperors from Otto I to Henry II presented themselves as leaders of a restored Roman and Christian empire.⁶³ Their portraits provide both a source for several of the motifs in the drawing of Alexander and a template for reading representations of authority in tenth- and eleventh-century England, where Ottonian images had a particularly strong influence on Anglo-Saxon art. To cite a well-known example, the grandeur of Otto III as a 'hieratic figure [...] worshipped rather than consulted' appears in two codices, the *Registrum Gregorii* from Trier and a lectionary from Reichenau.⁶⁴ In the first (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 14 bis), female personifications of Otto's provinces surround the emperor and hold orbs deferentially towards him; these orbs, satellites of the larger one held by the emperor himself, represent a Byzantine motif, in which 'the golden cope and the globe that fitted perfectly into the emperor's hand [...] signified a sovereignty embracing the entire world'.⁶⁵ They appear throughout Carolingian and Ottonian portraits and ultimately account for that held by Alexander in the Royal manuscript, but the woman next to the conqueror seems also to derive from these Ottonian images. In

⁶² Dodwell, *The Canterbury School of Illumination*, p. 22.

⁶³ Bernhardt, 'Concepts and Practice of Empire in Ottonian Germany', offers an invaluable survey of the four emperors and their artistic agendas.

⁶⁴ Oakeshott, *Classical Inspiration in Medieval Art*, p. 132. Although the emperor is generally identified as Otto III, Bernhardt, 'Concepts and Practice of Empire in Ottonian Germany', p. 152, identifies him as Otto II.

⁶⁵ Duby, *History of Medieval Art*, p. 17.



Figure 5.
'The Personifications
of Slavina, Germania,
Gallia, and Roma',
München, Bayer.
Staatsbibl., MS Clm. 4453,
fol. 23^v. Tenth or eleventh
century. Reproduced with
permission of Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek München

the second (München, Bayer. Staatsbibl., MS Clm. 4453, fol. 23^v), a portrait of Otto III modelled on the adoration of the Magi, the feminine personifications of Slavina, Germania, Gallia, and Roma do not stand by with in orbs in hand but bow towards the emperor and deliver, from left to right, an orb, a cornucopia, a palm, and a crown.⁶⁶ The woman of the Royal manuscript may not suggest any personified realm of Alexander's empire, but her placement to the left of the conqueror continues at least one tradition, that of the Ottonian emperors. Of these Ottonian portraits, that in the *Registrum Gregorii* proved especially influential in the tenth and eleventh century, and evidence suggests a direct link between Trier, where the manuscript was produced, and England.⁶⁷ A certain printer and goldsmith named Benna travelled in the tenth century

⁶⁶ Oakeshott, *Classical Inspiration in Medieval Art*, p. 133. Standing nearest Otto are the ministers of sacred and secular authority, the church and the military. See Beckwith, *Early Medieval Art*, pp. 102–04 for a comparative discussion.

⁶⁷ Beckwith, *Early Medieval Art*, pp. 103–04.

between the two, and while he was not the master of the *Registrum*, he may have assisted in its production, which would explain the Anglo-Saxon elements in that codex and the 'Byzantine frontality and magnificence' in Anglo-Saxon art in turn.⁶⁸ As will be discussed below, however, these emperors' portraits relied on Roman and Byzantine motifs, including the personification of Rome and Constantinople, and the presence of female characters in royal images thus represents a long-standing tradition.

Portraits of the fourth Ottonian emperor, Henry II, reveal another significant appropriation of these women in the century of the Royal manuscript. Henry's reign, one 'characterized by an intensified notion of divinely ordained rulership', witnessed the combination of traditional Ottonian personifications and the direct involvement of Christ and heavenly and ecclesiastical figures.⁶⁹ Two portraits of the early eleventh century convey, in particular, the influence that Henry had on Anglo-Saxon representations of kings. In the first, a Sacramentary, Christ crowns Henry while Sts Peter and Paul support his arms and angels touch both his sceptre and sword, a detail that suggests that the woman in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 performs a similar act of blessing upon Alexander's own sceptre.⁷⁰ In the second, from the Bamberg *Pericopes*, Christ crowns Henry and his queen (again supported by the Saints) in the upper panel, while in the lower panel the personified provinces Gallia, Roma, and Germania offer traditional symbols of power, as seen above.⁷¹ Together, these portraits effectively combine sacred and secular female figures: in the first, Henry's tools of kingship (his sword and sceptre) are physically supported by angelic agents, while in the second, the personified provinces suggest both the scope of his empire and the obeisance that its regions owe to him. Projecting Henry's authority also relies, of course, on his interaction with Christ. Carolingian, Ottonian, and Anglo-Saxon royal portraiture relied a great deal on such Christian motifs of authority, and nowhere is this more evident than in the 'Benediction Hand' motif, the act of coronation or blessing as performed by the hand of God, that

⁶⁸ Ortenberg, *The English Church and the Continent*, pp. 79–80.

⁶⁹ Bernhardt, 'Concepts and Practice of Empire in Ottonian Germany', p. 158.

⁷⁰ This scene (München, Bayer. Staatsbibl., MS Clm. 4456, fol. 11^r) influenced artists in England into the twelfth century; Dodwell, *Pictorial Arts of the West*, pp. 332–33, reproduces, for example, a Bury St Edmunds drawing (now New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 736, fol. 22^v) of St Edmund enthroned and crowned in similar fashion to Henry.

⁷¹ Bernhardt, 'Concepts and Practice of Empire in Ottonian Germany', pp. 159–60 describes the portrait (München, Bayer. Staatsbibl., MS Clm. 4452, fol. 2^v) at length.

appears in both large- and small-scale formats in Anglo-Saxon England.⁷² The frequent exchange of manuscripts between the Ottonian Empire and England helps to explain the artistic influence of such images as the portraits of Henry, yet the Ottonians' political ideology also shaped English conceptions of kingship. In the century before BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, English kings had appropriated, for example, the use of the Ottonian terms *imperium* and *basileus*, and the orb, figurative of their dominion, had begun to appear in royal portraiture.⁷³

Collectively the Ottonian images evoke, then, some intriguing comparisons with the Royal manuscript's portrait of Alexander. None of these medieval emperors matched, of course, the size or historical significance of Alexander's empire, but these elements of the Macedonian's legacy do not appear in the eleventh-century drawing beyond the suggestions of his orb and sceptre. Neither, however, could the pagan Alexander enjoy the divine ordination of his Christian medieval counterparts. The drawing in the Royal manuscript stands between these two historical realities, which the texts of the manuscript also emphasize: Alexander wielded undeniable authority, but he did so in the pre-Christian era. The woman in the drawing surely relies on the Ottonian tradition for female models, but she does not precisely mimic their actions, just as Alexander relies on several royal portraits of the eleventh century and earlier, but he does not precisely mimic them either. Like Alexander's reception in general, the drawing must be contextualized not only within these traditions of portraying kingship but in the eleventh century's changing notions of kingship as well. Although the Ottonians were influenced in part by their Carolingian predecessors (notably by Charles the Bald, who had incorporated the orb and personified provinces into his portraiture in the ninth century), it was the grandeur of Ottonian representation, built equally on Roman and Byzantine notions of rule, that made its presence felt visually and textually in Anglo-Saxon England, particularly in the years leading up to the Royal manuscript.⁷⁴

⁷² Similar testaments to piety and divine sanction appear in the portrait of Cnut and Aefgyfu in BL, MS Stowe 944, and that of Edgar holding the New Minster Charter up towards Christ in BL, MS Cotton Vespasian A. VIII. Hilmo, *Medieval Images, Icons, and Illustrated English Literary Texts*, p. 71 contextualizes the latter portrait with the 'ritual associations with divine power' that developed in the tenth century. Backhouse and others, eds, *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art*, pp. 173–77 lists examples of the Benediction Hand type of coinage from Edward the Elder and Athelstan II.

⁷³ Ortenberg, *The English Church and the Continent*, pp. 61–64.

⁷⁴ See Hinks, *Carolingian Art*, pp. 133–35 for the orb and personifications in Charles the Bald's portraiture.

Throughout the 1050s, for example, Edward the Confessor conscientiously presented himself in text and image as an imperial ruler in the manner of the Ottonians, from whom he took inspiration for his most ambitious representations. On account of this, Edward's coins and seals provide a range of visual associations between the drawing of Alexander in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 and the transformation of royal portraiture in the tenth and eleventh century. In the middle of his reign Edward adopted, for example, the aforementioned Continental models for various images. Coins depict him holding first the fleur-de-lis sceptre and then the orb and sceptre together (a combination of royal accoutrements that had travelled to the Ottonians through Byzantium and classical Rome), and in a coin of 1056, in nearly identical fashion to Alexander he appears enthroned, crowned, and holding his sceptre in his left hand and his orb in his right.⁷⁵ Even the pose of facing towards the left, an adaptation of Byzantine and Ottonian 'frontality', anticipates Alexander in the Royal manuscript.⁷⁶ There remains, moreover, one crucial distinction in the representation of Christian European rulership from Byzantium to Edward. These regal figures possess an orb with a cross, a detail conspicuously absent in the portrait of the pagan Alexander. Christocentric and typologically suggestive kingship had long been imperative to medieval rulers, as Carolingian artists attributed the orb and sceptre to images of Christ as well as those of their royal patrons; Carolingian and Ottonian emperors thus both appear as the benefactors of divinely sanctioned authority, and, as discussed above, such tangible objects of devotion as books and crosses play a vital role in Anglo-Saxon royal portraits.⁷⁷ The cross-mounted orb and the blessing of ecclesiastical figures, if not the hand of God, represent, in sum, André Grabar's argument that an emperor's faith is 'the source of his power', and submission to a divine authority secures his role as emperor ('basileus') on earth.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 157–59.

⁷⁶ Backhouse and others, eds, *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art*, pp. 185–87 identify this pose as ultimately deriving from the personification of Constantinople on a sixth-century coin of the Byzantine emperor Justin II, and this influence again underscores the considerable relevance of Eastern motifs for Western images of kingship.

⁷⁷ Lasko, *Ars Sacra 800–1200*, pp. 11–12, 129 traces the orb and sceptre to Carolingian crucifixes with Christ holding them, a motif that also appears on an eleventh-century altar frontal given by Henry II to Basel Cathedral.

⁷⁸ Grabar, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin*, p. 98: 'c'est dans sa foi qu[e l'empereur] trouve la source de son pouvoir, et c'est en se soumettant à la volonté divine qu'il assure sa propre puissance, le *numen* du *basileus* ne pouvant triompher qu'en reconnaissant la supériorité du *numen* du "pambasileus"'.



Figure 6.
 'Sovereign-Martlets Coin
 of Edward the Confessor',
 London, Brit. Mus., BM, CM
 1867,8–12,369. Eleventh century.
 © Trustees of the British Museum

Portraying Alexander — not simply a pagan ruler but one denounced by early Christian writers — in such terms was naturally problematic, yet the portrait of Alexander does feature one probable act of Christian redemption, the act of anointment performed by the woman to his right. Although the *aspergillum* and *aspersorium* that she holds are immediately recognizable as the tools of liturgies for the dead and for purification in the context of manuscript drawings, the act itself recalls another liturgical service important for contemporary conceptions of kingship. Georges Duby has written on the ideological shift in such conceptions that occurred in the eighth century, when rulers wishing to assert their authority over all of Latin Christendom appropriated Christological motifs. The act of coronation thus became 'a religious ceremony', in which the king was 'anointed with holy oil which bestowed on him the power of vanquishing evil',⁷⁹ and a transformative act via baptism and the transmission of 'divine grace by which alone he was enabled to fulfil his royal ministerium'.⁸⁰ In this context, the woman's careful application of her brush to the hand that holds the sceptre, one sign of power (along with the orb that he grasps in his right hand), suggests a blessing or confirmation of Alexander's authority. Such

⁷⁹ Duby, *History of Medieval Art*, pp. 15, 25.

⁸⁰ Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe*, pp. 270–74. Ward, 'The Coronation Ceremony in Medieval England', p. 175, notes that some French *ordines* instruct that the hands, not the head, of the king be baptized.

a relationship between the female personification and male ruler exists, to be sure, in Ottonian models, but their sources offer yet another intriguing interpretation of the Royal manuscript's frontispiece.

These Roman and Byzantine imperial portraits, in which the Tyches, or personifications of Rome and Constantinople derived from the Greek equivalent of Fortune, flank the primary political subject, also rely on the interaction between the ruler and female figures.⁸¹ In both Roman and medieval art, in fact, Tyche is often conflated with Fortuna and Isis, all of whom provide another possible influence for the woman in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1. She often appears with a cornucopia, a sheaf of wheat, or a branch, and when combined with Rome (a militarized figure), she conveys a totality of empire based on the symbiotic symbolism that combines 'military attributes of the goddess Roma with general symbols of festivity and prosperity'.⁸² A twelfth-century manuscript of Seneca's *De remediis fortuitorum* belonging to the Holy Cross Abbey in Essex demonstrates that artists translated these attributes from one classical goddess to another, as Fortune holds Tyche's branch in one hand while turning her traditional wheel with the other, and further confections of the goddesses had a long tradition indeed in Western Europe.⁸³ A second- or third-century sculpture of the pagan goddess Abundantia with a cornucopia survives, for example, from Lincolnshire, and a sixth-century ivory relief of Isis holding the same was incorporated into an Aachen cathedral under Henry II, whose influence on Anglo-Saxon portraiture has been noted above.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art*, discusses two examples of sixth-century consular diptychs with the personifications of Rome and Constantinople. In cat. 48, the first city holds an orb and the second the fasces; in cat. 49, Rome holds the orb and fasces, while Constantinople holds a shield. His cat. 155 (four fourth-century statuettes of Tyches) shows the various traditions of depicting such personifications: here, Alexandria and Constantinople hold fruits and grains, while Rome carries a shield and staff.

⁸² Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art*, cat. 176.

⁸³ The MS is now Princeton, University Library, MS Garrett 114, fol. 97^r.

⁸⁴ For the sculpture of Abundantia, see Saxl and Wittkower, eds, *British Art and the Mediterranean*, pl. 8. 2, and for the figure of Isis, see Weitzmann, 'The Ivories of the So-Called Grado Chair', p. 67, fig. 38. This last figure is especially intriguing for the drawing of Alexander in the Royal manuscript. Unlike the relief in Aachen, Isis is traditionally depicted with her ritualistic implements, including palm fronds, a situla (a container for holy water), and a sistrum (a rattle), and the latter two are strikingly similar to the pot and brush held by the woman next to Alexander. Such attributes informed Christian art as well; e.g., Katz, *Divine Mirrors: The Virgin Mary*, p. 230 identifies the influence of Isis's palms in medieval representations of the Virgin.

All of these images of personified cities and provinces from the diptychs of Roman consuls to the portraits of Ottonian emperors convey a sense of, or at least an aspiration for, *imperium*. Holding a map of the world while flanked by the two capitals of the Empire or holding an orb while receiving tribute from Francia, Roma, and Germania places the ruler at the head of an unmistakably expansive empire. The Royal manuscript, however, must be considered as a visual and textual portrayal of *imperium* both in its own era and as a culmination of previous ones, and as it presents an ancient figure of unparalleled popularity in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, this manuscript responds to notions of such figures up to and including the late eleventh century. These notions, like the portrait of Alexander, relied on a range of Byzantine, Carolingian, and Ottonian associations, especially analogous to Edward the Confessor, who belonged to a transitional period of Anglo-Saxon royal portraiture that consciously evoked these earlier traditions. By basing his self-presentation on coins and seals as a king holding the orb and sceptre on such Continental sources, he provided one likely model for the drawing of Alexander in the Royal manuscript. However, this model was not only visual, for Edward conveyed his imperial aspirations on a semantic level as well, and this symbiosis between text and image has a particular relevance for the manuscript's portrayal of Alexander. The same seal on which Edward appears holding the fleur-de-lis sceptre and orb is identified, for example, as the 'Seal of Edward, King (*Basileus*) of the English'. Although Edward was not the first Anglo-Saxon king to take the title of *basileus*, his desire to equate his rule with that of the Ottonian rulers 'marks the beginning of a new image of kingship with a stress on the combination of throne, crown, sword and sceptre' that William I and the Norman kings of England would further develop.⁸⁵ The exaggerated tone of such a title and such a representation had escalated, in fact, since the tenth century. Athelstan presented himself, for example, as a Christocentric emperor in his coins and charters, and Edgar adopted the grand title 'Basileus Anglorum, et rex atque imperator regum et nationum infra fines Britaniae commorantium' ('King of the English, and both king and emperor of the kings and nations abiding within the boundaries of Britain').⁸⁶ Produced a century or more later, BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I thus represents the culmination of these tenth-century titles and images as well as the

⁸⁵ Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 159–60.

⁸⁶ Wormald, 'Late Anglo-Saxon Art: Some Questions and Suggestions', p. 105. Davies, *The First English Empire*, pp. 36–37 discusses similar language in Athelstan's coins and charters. For Edgar's title, see Birch, 'Index of the Styles and Titles of Sovereigns of England', p. 53.

notions of kingship forwarded by Edward, yet it also stands across the inevitably crucial divide of 1066.

As Edward appropriated visual motifs from the Ottonians, so William adopted them from Edward, but he also took care to present his own version of royal power as one that encompassed kingship and conquest equally. One side of his Great Seal shows the king enthroned and holding the orb and sceptre, yet the other depicts the conqueror mounted on his horse, and in similar fashion William's titles announce him as 'victoriosus Anglorum basileus' ('victorious king of the English') and 'rex gloriosissimus' ('most glorious king'), and, in an unmistakable celebration of his conquest, the seal conveys a personal narrative in miniature: 'Angliam veniens in ore gladii regnum adeptus sum Anglorum' ('Invading England, I obtained this kingdom of the English with the edge of my sword').⁸⁷ The first, self-titled 'liber' of BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, consisting of the portrait, the Valerius *Epitome*, the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, and an epitaph for the conqueror, presents Alexander in just this manner in both its frontispiece and two texts. The one conveys to the viewer the scope of the ancient king's power and the regal symbolism of his orb and sceptre, then the other relates how he attained such power in his conquests from the Greek-speaking Mediterranean all the way to India. The story of Alexander ended, however, in a sudden failure as shocking as his remarkable ascent to the head of a global empire. In the centuries following the Royal manuscript, more and more writers would call attention to the fact that Alexander died at the very moment that he could justifiably be portrayed holding the orb, or the globe, in his hand, and that all that he attained was torn asunder by his successors. Suggestions as to why Alexander lost his empire and explanations of what befell it after his death comprise the agenda of the second hand's contribution to the manuscript, and this second scribe undoubtedly denies the glorifying tenor (and veracity) of his predecessor's texts. Whether or not he intended his narratives as a commentary on more than Alexander and Macedon remains, however, a necessary question.

Indeed, what the manuscript eventually became under the second scribe's hand in the late eleventh century — a testimony to the end of even the most glorious of ancient empires and a critical stance against the heroism of history's most successful conqueror — demands a reconsideration of its agenda. If the peculiar treatment of Alexander in this manuscript is read as a response to

⁸⁷ Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 172 discusses William's seal; for his titles, see Birch, 'Index of the Styles and Titles of Sovereigns of England', pp. 62–63.

the notions of *imperium* and *imperator* in a time that witnessed first the imitation of such notions by Anglo-Saxon kings and then the realization of them by William I, it becomes more than a literary document. As will be discussed at length in the following chapters, many of the works in this study stand on their own merit as impressive attempts to recover and correct a massive literary corpus, but the majority of them, beginning with BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, also encourage readings as artefacts that engage with particular historical and cultural conceptions of kingship and empire. In post-Conquest England, such conceptions were fast changing. A manuscript that presents conflicting traditions of Alexander's legacy — legends that celebrate his career and mourn his death and Orosius's denunciation of his character and empire — deserves, then, to be read as a response both to the conqueror's reputation and the era in which the codex was produced. Only within such a reading, in fact, will the efforts of the second scribe be appreciated to the utmost.

LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY, MS ROYAL, 13. A. I: TEXTS

Alexander romances, including the Valerius *Epitome* that begins BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, owe a good deal of both their popularity and their eventual demise to the claim that Nectanabus, the Egyptian pharaoh and sorcerer, fathered Alexander in an act of deception and sexual intrigue. On account of this displacement of Philip as Alexander's father, those (such as the redactor of the *Parva recapitulatio* in the Royal manuscript) who sided with Roman historical *auctoritas* had little choice but to reject the story of Alexander's origins in the romance tradition, which bills itself in authoritative fashion as 'historia Alexandri Magni regis Macedonum ortus vitae et obitus' ('the history of the birth, life, and death of Alexander the Great, King of the Macedonians') in the manuscript's incipit.¹ This redactor's dissatisfaction with this supposedly accurate biography is particularly understandable in the beginning and closing sections of the *Epitome*, the two sections that he effectively rewrites. Indeed, the Nectanabus episode and Alexander's sudden death in Babylon were the hallmarks of late antique and medieval romances of the conqueror: the former replaces Alexander's Macedonian lineage with an entertaining tale of sorcery and seduction, and the latter both presents a tragic scene of regicide and mourning and neglects the subsequent political discord that established the powers of the Hellenistic world. There are, however, moments in the *Epitome* that the redactor found acceptable. He sees fit, after all, to comment

¹ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 1^r.

on only three subjects (Alexander's birth, his visit to Jerusalem, and his death), and distinguishing the 'romance' from 'historical' qualities of this popular narrative is paramount to assessing why so many readers both before and after BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 accepted the Valerius *Epitome* as a reliable narrative of the Macedonian conqueror.

*The First Scribe: The Valerius Epitome
and the Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*

Although the addition of Nectanabus to Greek Alexander romance likely began as an attempt to strengthen the conqueror's association with the political history and culture of Alexandria, the tale of the sorcerer and his affair with Olympias proved contentious among later audiences of the Alexander legend.² For those like the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor, Alexander is clearly troubling on his own merits, both because of his impetuous behaviour and the political strife that his death ensured, but the prominent role of Nectanabus in the *Epitome* adds (if one accepts it as truth) a new dimension of anxiety. To be sure, this romance, as it survives in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, does not emphasize the diabolical character of Nectanabus, and although he invokes both heavenly and hellish divinities in his magic,³ he, like his son later, is a trickster and a con artist: to escape Egypt unnoticed, he shaves his beard and head, and to convince Olympias that the god Ammon will impregnate her he wears a ram costume. At the same time, Nectanabus represents a politically irresponsible and indeed destructive figure, and the *Epitome* explicitly relates that when he faces invasion by a massive Eastern coalition, he abandons his people, only to 'invade' Macedon because of his lust for Olympias. In the Macedonian court, Nectanabus finds himself at home, for here there are no victims, only instigators. From his first meeting with Olympias, Nectanabus seizes power by playing on the fears of the royal couple:

² The story originated with the Greek romance known as the *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, likely written in Alexandria and extant in some form since the third century BC (as discussed in the introduction). The pharaoh and sorcerer Nectanabus had long been the subject of his own disparate histories, and the notion that he fathered Alexander unified two legends: the continued belief in his return from exile to save Egypt in a time of great distress and Alexander's perceived divinity via his nomination to pharaoh in 332 BC; see Perry, 'The Egyptian Legend of Nectanabus'.

³ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, fol. 5^v: 'uocaret deos superos inferosque'.

Quin Nectanabus statim suam adhibet constellationem, exploraturus ea que regina petiuerat. Quo facto ait 'non uana ista ad te fama peruenit, sed enim uera est. Ego enim ac si propheta ex Egipto opitulabor, ne qua de diuortio formidaueris; nam fatale tibi est secundum quod perspeximus certe deum genitura, filiumque ultorem omnium, si que in te Philippus audebit'. Tum illa 'et cui nam' inquit 'deo ad thorum debeor?'. Respondit 'Ammoni deo Lybie'.

Nectanabus immediately applied himself to his stargazing to investigate those things that the queen sought to know. When he had finished, he said, 'That rumour that you're hearing [regarding Philip's plans to marry another woman] is not false but true. Indeed, I, a prophet from Egypt, will offer you help, so that you won't need to fear any talk of divorce. According to what I saw, it is truly your destiny to give birth to a god, a son, and an avenger for all of the things that Phillip will dare to do to you'. Then Olympias asked, 'And which god am I supposed to admit to my bed?'. He answered, 'The god Ammon of Libya'.⁴

Olympias's obvious fear of being replaced as queen without any means of protection or vengeance quickly compels her to succumb to Nectanabus's claims regarding her divine child, but his deception does not end with the Macedonian queen. From his conception, Alexander promises to be not only a mighty emperor who will succeed Philip, but also the offspring of sexual and political intrigue who will represent significant shame and fear for the aging Macedonian ruler.

In order to deceive Philip, Nectanabus creates a series of dream visions and spectacles designed to intimidate the king by reminding him of his limited authority and his eventual over-shadowing by the divine *Wunderkind* born of 'Ammon' and Olympias. Philip's acceptance of his fate as the adoptive father of a mightier king than he and Olympias's schemes for vengeance against her philandering husband culminate in a scene of atmospheric disturbance and public frenzy:

Tunc mulier uehementius ingemiscens exegit puerum. Qui ubi ad humum lapsus est, motus protinus insequitur terre et tonitruum crepor uentorumque conflictus et fluminum [likely an error for 'fulminum'] ictus et fulgurum coruscatio, ut uideres omni mundo hac partitudine curam elaboratam.

Then [Olympias] groaned more vehemently and pushed the boy from her womb. When he fell onto the ground, an earthquake immediately followed, as well as the roar of thunder, a windstorm, and the stroke and flash of lightning, such that you would have seen excessive concern over the whole world upon this birth.⁵

⁴ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 7^v.

⁵ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 13^v.

This scene frightens Philip to the point that he believes the child to be the son of a god, and even though he knows the boy is not his own, he vows to care for him in memory of a deceased son from a previous marriage. Although Philip fears the portents and the suspicion that Olympias, his estranged and politically dangerous wife, has gained substantial power via the boy, he still adopts Alexander and inextricably links his kingdom and reputation to the child destined for greatness. The passage also represents, of course, the culmination of Nectanabus's promises and prophecies. He has used his sorcery to dictate the terms of the child's future success, and the ancient world's greatest conqueror is in this telling preordained by an Egyptian con artist, who, for all of his deception, is consistently accurate about his son's career: he will be a mighty emperor of a western and eastern realm, he will outshine Philip and protect Olympias, and he will die young, far from home and far too soon. These aspects of Alexander's life form the collective ethos of romance narratives, yet they are equally fundamental to historical ones. Nectanabus's prophecies are thus historically valid, and it is not what he says, but who he is, that represents the stuff of fiction, and when he serves his purpose (granting Alexander a sordid but spectacular past), he is quickly exiled from the narrative. During an astronomy lesson, Alexander kills his biological father to prove the point that the sorcerer's prophecies have limitations and his magic cannot save his life. Nectanabus's response to his son's violence — 'Nulli inquit mortalium contra fatum fuga permissa est' ('No mortal is allowed to escape his fate') — sets a cautionary tone for the remainder of the *Epitome*,⁶ as Alexander and his three paternal figures (Nectanabus, Philip, and the Persian king Darius) will all learn this lesson. With the sorcerer's last words and his warning so appropriate for the Alexander legend, much of the fantastic nature of the *Epitome* yields to historical episodes in its portrayal of the conqueror's formative years and kingship.

Kingship in the Valerius Epitome

First and foremost in this commonality of history and romance is the tension between Alexander and Philip. Olympias's attraction to Nectanabus's prophecies results, as seen above, from her knowledge that Philip plans to remarry and her hope that a divine child will protect her from such disgrace and dismissal from the court. After Alexander kills the sorcerer, the *Epitome* returns to the animosity within the Macedonian royal family, and in one of its most striking

⁶ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, fol. 15^v.

appropriations from historical sources, it presents the outburst of Alexander's resentment towards his adoptive father. Publicizing his intent to remarry, Philip hosts a reception for his bride and her family, yet Alexander, decidedly his mother's champion, likewise publicly intervenes:

Aderat tunc inter regales delicias Lisias quidam risum excitando uir facundissimus. Qui cum in gratiam regis adolescentulum uellet admordere multimodis uerborum ridiculis sepius illum adgressus ac sepius admonitus ut ad alterum reuerteretur cui ludum suum placere sciret. Ergo ille non obaudiens tandemque iuuenis irritatus, poculum quod sibi pre manu erat iaculans, Lysiam uulnerauit. Sed rex effervescente ira prosiliens in Alexandrum crureque uulnerato procumbit. Tunc Alexander arrepto gladio omnes qui sese ueluti comprehendendum irruerant, dissicit et egreditur. Qui autem aderant Philippum graviter uulneratum cubiculo inducentes lectulo deponent.

There was at the royal banquet a certain Lisias, a man very adept at provoking laughter. Wishing to get into Philip's good graces, he often approached the young [Alexander] to taunt him with various biting remarks, and he often warned Alexander to return to his child's games that he knew he would find enjoyable. On account of this, the young man, no longer listening to such words, at last got angry and wounded Lisias by throwing a cup that was at hand. Philip, however, was roused to anger and jumped towards Alexander but fell forward and suffered a bloody wound. Alexander then unsheathed his sword, struck all the men who had charged him as if to grab him, and left the room. Those who were at the scene, however, led Philip, gravely wounded, to his room and placed him on his bed.⁷

This disconcerting scene of filial violence attests, of course, to the acrimony among Philip, Olympias, and Alexander that features so prominently in ancient narratives of Macedon, romances and histories alike. For the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor, this sort of behaviour confirms his claims that father and son, both notoriously impetuous, were given to decidedly non-regal behaviour, but in the *Epitome* the scene underscores Alexander's lack of kinship with Philip more than his inherited psychoses. Nectanabus sires the child, after all, and from his initial prophecy to Olympias the sorcerer confirms that Alexander's greatness owes little to Philip, here relegated to the role of adoptive father and pushed further to the boundary of irrelevance.

Moreover, Philip is a king who slowly but surely loses his authority during Alexander's youth, beginning with Nectanabus's affair with his wife and confirmed by their son's violent rebellion at Philip's wedding banquet. Soon there-

⁷ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fols 18^v-19^r.

after, Alexander wins his first battle and witnesses his father's embarrassment at the hands of Persian envoys, who demand tribute from the lesser kingdom of Macedon. Then, a mere folio later, the heir-apparent finds himself suddenly on the throne, after another sexual 'invasion' of his parents' court. A wealthy Macedonian named Pausanias cannot control his lust for Olympias either, but unlike the sorcerer Nectanabus he resorts to brute violence against both king and queen. Having raped Olympias and assaulted Philip (once again helpless to defend against such criminality), the culprit thrusts Alexander into the dual role of avenger and protector. After so much discord, Philip and Alexander make their peace in the unlikeliest of situations:

Quibus cognitis irruens regiam deprehendit Pausanie uiolentiam. Cumque eum iaculo destinaret, tenereturque formidine matris uulnerande, Olimpias sic eum adhortatur 'iaculare' inquit 'fili iaculare ne dubites'. Enim uero Alexander cum adhuc Philippum spirare comperisset, iussit Pausaniam illorum aduehi, gladiumque in dexteram patris misit quo manu eum oppeteret, occidit eum. Ergo iam moriens Philippus ait 'nichil est quod me uite finis aut mors contristet. Ultus enim auctorem iniurie libens oppetam' et adiecit 'reminiscor' inquit 'o Alexander deum matri tue pregnatu predixisse quod uindicem filium esset paritura', et his dictis spiritum exalauit. Alexander quoque mox regiam procurauit ei sepulturam⁸.

When Alexander had learned [that his mother was in danger], he rushed into the palace and saw the violence committed by Pausanias. When Alexander aimed his spear at Pausanias, he checked himself for fear of wounding his mother, so Olympias urged him on and said, 'Throw your spear, my son, do not hesitate to throw it'. Then when Alexander found Philip still breathing, he ordered Pausanias to be brought over to them, and he placed a sword in his father's right hand (the hand with which he could engage Pausanias), and Philip killed him. Then Philip with his dying words said, 'There's nothing about the end of life or death that can bring me sorrow, and since I've gotten my revenge against the author of this injustice, I will meet death willingly'. He added, 'I remember, Alexander, that a god predicted to your pregnant mother that she would bear a son and an avenger'. After he said this, he breathed his last, and Alexander immediately arranged a royal burial for him.⁸

This scene surely posed a problem for medieval readers. For those like the *Parua recapitulatio*-redactor, Philip (like his son) was an unsavoury figure, but within the romance confines of the *Epitome* he (again, like his son) suffers a fall rife with moralities. If one finds blame in Olympias's relationship with Nectanabus, then Philip can be forgiven for his attempts to remarry; he then becomes a

⁸ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, fol. 21^r-21^v.

cuckold, an impotent king, and a victim of his wife's sexual appeal, a pitiable rather than condemnable figure, but one who justifiably attempts to exile his *femme fatale* of a wife and marry another for political alliances. If, on the other hand, one reads Philip as a foolish king, intent on fulfilling his whims and oblivious of the dangers within his court, then his demise at the hands of a man who seeks not his kingdom but his wife is rather appropriate.

For Alexander, however, Philip's murder marks the sudden beginning of his own kingship, the moment at which he will not allow any impediment to stand in the way of consolidating his power (even to the point of bribing his army with his recently murdered father's treasure), and the moment which begins his infamously ambiguous career. Even in the *Epitome*, Alexander skirts the boundary between romance hero and historical terror, and judging by the treatment of the Alexander legend by the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor, who has nothing to correct regarding the conqueror's policy towards the Greek-speaking world, the Persians, or the Indians, Alexander's early campaigns did not prove controversial to readers with an eye towards historical accuracy and the denigration of Alexander's romance heroism. In the *Epitome* his military stance conflates, in fact, two traditions. From the romance perspective, Alexander's exploits, disguises, success on the battlefield, and even the rare amorous interlude present him as a swashbuckling hero of adventure abroad, while the influence of classical histories manifests itself in Alexander's alarming cruelty towards his Mediterranean neighbours and his commiseration for his Persian adversaries. Although the campaign against Darius and the Persian Empire dominates this latter portion of the *Epitome*, subsequent episodes (e.g., Alexander's relationships with the Indian king Porus and the Ethiopian queen Candace) were well known because of their inclusion in, or at least compatibility with, the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, a record of wondrous people, flora, and fauna. Collectively these scenes attest to the laudatory appraisal of Alexander's career in the *Epitome*, despite the fact that, as will be examined in the following chapters, the *Philippic Histories*, the most popular Roman history in England, particularly condemns him for his friendliness towards Eastern foes and his penchant for adopting their customs.

In romance, the perspective is reversed, for his enemies cannot help but yield to friendship with the foreign invader. Darius and Porus both dismiss, for example, the youthful Alexander as an upstart conqueror with dreams incommensurate with his ability, until he proves that his resourcefulness and bravery compensate for his lack of experience and demand respect. Darius even becomes a paternal figure for the young Macedonian, and Alexander, who has already treated the Persian royal family with respect and kindness, thus finds

himself in a familiar position of consoling and promising vengeance for his predecessor on the throne. In this fabrication of history, a dying Darius personally commits his family and his empire to his Macedonian enemy whom he has come to respect as one of his own:

Alexander uero repente superueniens eo ubi Darium obseruari compererat, offendit eum adhuc spirantem ac miserabiliter uulneratum, quod illi ultra opinionem luctuosum fuit. Iamque Darius exsanguis corpora eum utique uoce deficeret, manus supplices tendens attractansque genua Alexandri ut poterat tandem talibus alloquitur. 'En mihi in tali fortuna constituto magnum adest obitus huius solacium, quod in tuis manibus, o Alexander, fortissime regum spiritum effundam. Quare queso ne inuideas mihi sepulturam, quam mihi cum Persis tui Macedones exequantur. Tum Rogodunem matrem meam et Cilitto uxorem in manus tuas commendo, filiam uero Rixanen hac prece tibi commendo, ut eam coniugio tuo dignam censeas. Erit enim largiter id solacium, nihil sibi de regia coniunctione defuisse'. Et his dictis spiritum exalauit. Alexander uero multis lacrimis ad regiam dignitatem ritu Persarum illum sepeliri iubet.

Suddenly Alexander came upon the place where he had learned that Darius was being watched over, and he found him still breathing and wretchedly wounded, and he felt more sorrow for Darius than he had expected. Already Darius's bloodless body and voice alike were failing him, and he stretched out his hands in supplication and dragged himself towards Alexander's knees, so that he could speak to him at last about the following matters. 'Alas, it is a great comfort for death that I have been allotted such a fortune that I will breathe my last in your hands, O Alexander, mightiest of kings. On account of this, I beg you not to begrudge me burial, which your Macedonians can perform for me along with my Persians. I put the care of my mother Rogodunes and my wife Cilitto in your hands, as well as that of my daughter Rixane, with the prayer that you deem her worthy of being your wife. This will be a great comfort indeed, and there is nothing wanting in her to be your royal bride'. After he had spoken these things, he breathed his last. With much weeping Alexander ordered that he be buried in the Persian manner, in accordance with his royal dignity.⁹

The parallels among the death scenes for Alexander's father figures thus represent more than the sudden deaths of three rulers, an Egyptian pharaoh-sorcerer, an aging and impotent Macedonian, and an arrogant Great King of Persia. They also prefigure, of course, the untimely death of Alexander, when he, too, like Nectanabus, Philip, and Darius when they are seemingly in control of their fates, will learn that death comes unexpectedly and from the hands of those

⁹ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 41^r–41^v.

nearest him. While Nectanabus is killed by his own son and Philip by a young nobleman who infiltrates his bed and his court, Darius and Alexander share the distinction of being slain by treacherous members of their military ranks.

Alexander as Ruler of Macedon

For Alexander, this act of sedition stems from his contentiousness with the Mediterranean world, and woven into the entertaining and ultimately poignant narrative of the Persian campaign are a number of episodes that demonstrate this odd cultural divide. For enemies closer to home, that is, Alexander exhibits not a competitive spirit or playful animosity but a shockingly tyrannical taste for violence. Indeed, these scenes, contrasted with Alexander and Darius's game of one-upmanship via gifts and correspondence and the Macedonian's incognito visit to the Persian camp, show that the conqueror reserves his most vituperative behaviour for his neighbours, while he offers his Eastern foes magnanimous (and for the Persians, near filial) terms. When the Thebans resist him, for example, he razes their city, despite their pleas that it is the seat of his own beloved, ancestral gods Liber and Hercules. Scoffing at sacrilege, Alexander 'igni ferroque uastat tot seculis nobilem urbem' ('lays waste with fire and sword to a city noble for so many generations').¹⁰ The Athenians, who both refuse the conqueror's demands for tribute and admit that they rejoiced at his father Philip's death, only save themselves by a policy of appeasement rather than war with the Macedonian army, a policy hastily adopted by the Spartans as well. The potential disaster avoided by these city-states does not arise from idle threats and unwarranted fear, for the *Epitome* relates how Alexander treats the one (Tyre) that does resist him by rendering it 'terribile exemplum [...] quid uirium sit in Macedonum dextris' ('a terrible example of what strength the Macedonian hand has').¹¹ He does not exhibit such hostility towards the Persians or the Indians, and although the twelfth century would witness the 'orientalization' of the conqueror owing to the influence of the *Philippic Histories*, already in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I there are signs of the peculiar disparity between Alexander's 'domestic' and foreign policies.

Rather than exploiting this disparity to explain Alexander's demise, the *Epitome* relies on the sudden emergence of Macedonian treachery to strike the

¹⁰ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 29^r.

¹¹ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 23^v.

beloved conqueror at the height of his success and popularity. The last phase of the text, encompassing Alexander's Indian campaigns and death in Babylon, thus concludes the conqueror's life with the same romance sensibility with which it began. After quickly dispatching of the Indian king Porus, Alexander finds himself in the only amatory adventure of the entire schema of Greek and Latin romances. Unbeknownst to him, Candace, an Ethiopian queen, has his portrait secretly commissioned, and when one of her sons mistakes the conqueror for one of his generals and invites the Macedonians home, Alexander finds himself trapped. Only the queen knows his true identity, but she protects him from another of her sons, whose father-in-law Alexander killed in battle, and despite the family's tension, the conqueror leaves with a pledge of friendship and a heap of regal gifts. In the end, the Candace episode provides entertainment, but it never played a role in the debate over truth and fabrication in the Alexander tradition. Within the *Epitome*, the most disparaging aspect of the episode is that it represents Alexander entrapped, as happens on occasion, by his deception and sense of adventure; earlier in his campaigns he barely survives a swim in the frigid river Cydnus and a disguised visit to Darius's camp, and here he escapes only because Candace owes him a debt of gratitude for helping her son.

There are no wounds or mutinies in the *Epitome*, such as those that undermine Alexander's eastward march in historical sources, but there are these proverbial 'close calls' that show the daring — and some may say irresponsible — ruler on the brink of self-destruction. There is also, immediately following the Candace episode, political intrigue in Alexander's last days in Babylon. This section certainly failed to satisfy the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor (along with the Nectanabus story, it seems to have inspired him to compose his text in the first place), but why it did so poses an intriguing question. The *Epitome* reports that Antipater, Alexander's governor in Macedon, schemes against him, and when Olympias writes to her son about this potential trouble on the home front, Antipater summons his fellow conspirators to Babylon. Before arriving there, he procures poison and enlists the help of an attendant to mix it into Alexander's wine so that with one drink, the conqueror realizes that death is upon him. The *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor would have found in his Roman and Jewish sources, Orosius and Josephus Flavius, no alternative to the *Epitome*'s narrative (the Greek counter-tradition that Alexander died because of fever or illness would not be available for several centuries),¹² but his interest

¹² See below, Chapter 6, p. 192.

lies in the aftermath of Antipater's plot and Alexander's death, when his successors instigated a lengthy civil war that reduced the global empire to the respective kingdoms of the Hellenistic world. These events are merely suggested by the *Epitome* and quickly quelled by another round of supernatural omens that fittingly conclude Alexander's life.

The portent of the conqueror's death occurs, in fact, in similar fashion to those that accompany his conception and birth, for in Babylon, a public omen and a prophet once again foretell Alexander's extraordinary career, now at its end. After a woman gives birth to a baby with a half-dead, human upper body and a beastly lower body, Alexander summons an interpreter to explain the meaning of the child:

Qui mox secreto respondit regi dicens 'O rex, o utinam interpretatio hostibus et inimicis tuis haec esset. Superior quippe pars que ad hominem pertinet, queque iam putrida ac semiuiua uidetur, te significant domine mi rex, in promptu quoque est ut tu moriaris atque intereas. Inferior uero pars que ferinis capitibus cingitur, queque uiuere uidetur, hi sunt principes tibi subiecti. Et ut he fere inter se dissident, sic quoque post mortem tuam hi inter se discordes erunt'. Hec interpretatio non modicam Alexandro mestitiam intulit.

Soon the interpreter secretly responded to the king and told him, 'O king, if only this interpretation were meant for your enemies and foes! Seeing that the child's upper body is human-like and already rotting and half-dead, it signifies that you, my lord and king, will soon die and meet your end. Its lower body, which is covered in animal hair and seems to be alive, symbolizes the officers under your command. Just as these beasts quarrel amongst themselves, so there will be discord amongst your officers after your death'. This interpretation brought no small sorrow to Alexander.¹³

The prophet's mention of the discord that will follow upon Alexander's death hints at one of the defining aspects of the historical debate over the conqueror, as first evidenced by the *Parua recapitulatio*-redactor. Alexander's death did not simply (and certainly not quietly) bring Macedonian history to an untimely end. Rather, it instigated the period of civil wars among his survivors and laid the foundations for a new period of history well beyond the intent and scope of the *Epitome*. Immediately after Alexander dies, disputes over his burial divide his successors, each of whom wants to bury the corpse in his home territory, until the oracle of Jupiter commands them to place the conqueror's body in Alexandria and settles a potentially (and historically) volatile disagreement.

¹³ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 50^r-50^v.

Where the conqueror lay buried is thus where his legend, at least the Greek version that inspired innumerable romances, including the *Epitome*, began.

The narrative concludes by reviewing the grandeur of Alexander's accomplishments and the irony of his death by mere poison, as a list of Alexandrias the world over is summarily brought to an end by the statement, 'Et quem orbis uniuersus ferro superare non potuit uino et ueneno superatus atque exstinctus occubuit' ('And he whom the entire world could not conquer with the sword was overcome and killed by poisoned wine and now lay buried').¹⁴ In the Royal manuscript, a second statement officially concludes this first narrative: 'Explicit ortus uita et obitus Alexandri regis magni Macedonis' ('Here ends the birth, life, and death of Alexander the Great, King of Macedon').¹⁵ Although this catalogue of Alexander's most enduring physical memorials (his eponymous cities) spans the globe and recalls just how widespread an empire the king built in his reign, this final passage decidedly lacks balance. The glory of so many Alexandrias comes to an awkward halt with the subsequent statement, which occurs as suddenly and disconcertingly as his death itself, for in an instant, poisoned wine achieves what an entire world of armies could not. Moreover, these words became in their own right a popular epitaph for Alexander, and indeed they epitomize the legendary conception of a noble hero who died both too soon and ingloriously, the cornerstones of the tragedy of his brief career.

The Letter to Aristotle and an Epitaph for Alexander

The tenor of this conclusion and the insistence on the ineluctable fate that undercuts Alexander's success continues, more than its title suggests, in the *Epistola Alexandri Macedonis ad Aristotelem magistrum* (*Alexander of Macedon's Letter to his Teacher Aristotle*). Although this second item in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 is nominally a compendium of wonders and curiosities from Alexander's easternmost expedition, its narrative features unmistakable strands of egotism (an element that readers in Anglo-Saxon England had long since noticed, as discussed in the previous chapter) and its ultimate emphasis rests on the conqueror's death, again foretold by portents, and the subsequent angst that threatens to overshadow all that he has accomplished. Although the first scribe of BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 does not confront the Alexander legend with the same critical attitude as that of the second, he does, in the end, underscore

¹⁴ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, fol. 57^r–57^v.

¹⁵ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, fol. 51^v.

these aspects of the *Epistola*. The text of this letter begins in innocuous fashion, as Alexander explains his reasons for writing to Aristotle in terms of intellectual curiosity — ‘quoniam te deditum philosophiae noueram’ (‘since I know that you’re devoted to philosophy’).¹⁶ However, he clearly also sees its contents as a testimony to his military accomplishments. Reflecting on the Macedonians’ struggles, he defines the expedition’s success, for example, in self-aggrandizing terms — ‘Ago gratias Macedonie iuuenum uirtuti et inuicto exercitui nostro, quia in ea patientia perseuerauerunt ut rex regum appellarer’ (‘I’m thankful for the strength of the young men of Macedon and for my unconquered army, because they persevered with endurance during this campaign so that I could be called king of kings’) —,¹⁷ and he expresses to Aristotle his dream of a triumphant homecoming, in which as a world conqueror he will share the glory of India with his beloved mother: ‘ut me regem totius orbis terrarum, cum sublimibus trophis triumphante in Macedoniam Olimpiade matri mee remittor’ (‘so that I, triumphantly parading my trophies on high into Macedon, might return to my mother Olympias as king of this whole earth’).¹⁸ As stated by the *Epitome* mere folios earlier, however, such a homecoming is not Alexander’s fate, and the largest section of the *Epistola*’s narrative presents one of the most popular prophecies of Alexander’s death among classical and medieval texts.

Here, in three successive visits to a sacred grove, Alexander hears the circumstances of his death in Babylon and the bleak future that awaits his family in Macedon. These so-called trees of the sun and the moon reveal that the conqueror will realize his desire for world dominion — and in this version they even elevate his title to ‘numen [...] orbis terrarum’ (‘a god of the earthly globe’) — but he will not return from his new capital, where he will be poisoned in the ninth month of the following year.¹⁹ Like the glimpses of the strife among Alexander’s successors in the *Epitome*, these prophecies, too, nudge their text a step closer towards the historical reality of post-Alexandrian Macedon. In addition to Alexander’s murder, the trees foretell that his mother Olympias will suffer her own cruel fate without her son’s protection, when she will lie in the streets as carrion for birds and dogs. While the *Epitome* alludes to the civil wars in which Alexander’s leaders would dismember his empire, this passage alludes to the troubles that would beset the conqueror’s family after his

¹⁶ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 52^r.

¹⁷ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 53^v.

¹⁸ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 69^r.

¹⁹ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 73^v.

death, and because both of these scenes remained neglected in romances and thus shrouded in relative mystery in the *Epitome* and the letter to Aristotle, the *Parva recapitulatio* explicates them later in the Royal manuscript.

The *Epistola* does not, then, address at length the aftermath of Alexander's death but focuses instead on his mind-set regarding the prophecies of the trees. Faced with his impending death, Alexander devotes his Indian campaign to erecting memorials and establishing his legacy in the easternmost corner of his empire. He wishes to surpass the deeds of Bacchus and Hercules (and to remind everyone that he has done just that) and commissions pillars that will honour the memory of all who have participated in his campaign, from Aristotle, the recipient of the letter, to the conqueror himself and his army:

Ibique legato meo precepi [...] ut preciperet Persis et Babiloniis ut pilas solidas aureas duas pedum uiguum quinum altas fecissent preciperetque ut his omnia gesta mea scriberent, posuissentque in ultima India, ultra Liberi et Herculis trophaea quorum centum errant, quedam in diuersis regionibus. Et ego quinque mea aurea eis altiora de his pedibus statui imperaui, queque miraculo futura sunt carissime preceptor posteris seculis. Non parua ammiratione nouum perpetuumque statuimus monimentum. Ut inuidendum mortalibus esset perpetua de nobis opinio et animi industrie optime.

There I ordered my legate [...] that he have the Persians and Babylonians make two solid gold, twenty-five-foot tall pillars and write and inscribe all of my deeds thereon and place them in the outer reaches of India, beyond the one hundred trophies of Liber and Hercules placed in various places. I also ordered that five golden pillars, which will be a source of wonder for future generations, my dearest teacher, be raised up taller than theirs by some feet. We erected these as a novel and perpetual monument of no little admiration, and one to be envied by mortal men, so that their opinion of us and the great industry of our spirit might be everlasting.²⁰

The grandiose tone and insistence on the lavishness of the memorials soon became futile. As the *Epitome* undercuts Alexander's other memorials, the Alexandrias across his empire, by relating that poisoned wine killed him twelve years into his reign, so the scribe follows the account of these pillars with a text that undermines the conqueror's legacy.

Immediately following this account, that is, he inserts the oldest surviving copy from a distinctively English family of 'epitaphia' for the conqueror, but here — rather in the spirit of this manuscript as a whole — he offers a slight yet telling addition. Although the epitaph frequently appears in verse, this old-

²⁰ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fols 77^v–78^r.

est one is a composite, prosimetrum version, with the four central hexameters of the actual epitaph introduced by a chronological statement from Bede's *Chronica minora* or Jerome's *Chronicon* (the former had interpolated the latter) and concluded by an assessment by Orosius:

Alexander Illiricos et Thraces feliciter dimicans et subuersis Thebis in Persas arma corripuit. Primus Alexander Pillea natus in urbe. Quem comes Antipater confecto melle ueneno. Abstulit et medio regnantem flore necauit. Bis senis postquam populos domitauerat annis. Id est per xii annos Alexander oppressit orbem [sub] se trementem ferroque regna lesit. Finit liber.

After Alexander had fought successfully against the Illyrians and Thracians and had destroyed Thebes, he seized up arms against the Persians. After he had conquered others for twelve years, Alexander, who was born in Pella, was taken away and killed by poisoned sweet wine in the flower of his reign by his countryman Antipater. For twelve years, that is, Alexander oppressed the world trembling beneath him and struck down its kingdoms with his sword. Here ends this book.²¹

D. J. A. Ross has noted that these four verses form an 'epitaph [that] is complete in itself and gives the four essential facts: Alexander's place of birth, his murderer's name, the means employed and the length of his reign'.²² While this is certainly a valid observation, and these lines do provide an efficient survey of Alexander's career and death, this composite version of the epitome also undeniably alters the mournful tone of both the initial four verses and the *Epitome*, the first item in the manuscript. In this epitaph, the shadow of Orosian culpability for Alexander's collapse ('he oppressed the world trembling beneath him and struck down its kingdoms with his sword') lingers over an otherwise encomiastic passage. Indeed, one must ask why two statements from historians surround the seemingly self-contained narrative of the verses, for if the conception of Alexander dying in the flowering of his life were adequate for an epitaph, then such interpolation would be unnecessary and, in the case of the Orosian statement, contradictory. Of course, the arrangement in this specific codex also anticipates the agenda of the *Parua recapitulatio*, in that the epitaph mingles elements of admiration and criticism to form a broader view of

²¹ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 78^r. For the opening statement, see Bede, *Chronica minora*, ed. by Mommsen, III, 275 (with marginal reference to the corresponding passage in Jerome); the concluding sentence is found in Orosius, *Historiarum aduersum paganos*, ed. by Zangemeister, 3. 23.

²² Ross, 'Parua recapitulatio: An English Collection of Texts Relating to Alexander the Great', p. 162.

Alexander. The sternest judgment on the conqueror comes, for example, at the end of the epitaph, and this second historical interpolation presents an opinion that contrasts starkly with the verses written above it. Here, the author of the epitaph employs Orosius as a commentary ('Id est [...]') on the bald statement that Alexander conquered others for twelve years, yet this interpolation has been adapted into a sentiment even more threatening than its original. In Orosius, this simply reads, 'With his sword Alexander pressed upon the world that trembled beneath him for twelve years', but the sentence in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 adds the detail that Alexander also laid waste to kingdoms with that sword. As a result, this epitaph opposes the representation of the conqueror in the four hexameters, which repeat the mournful ending of the *Epitome*.²³ The scribe, like the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor, thus asserts one historical tradition (Orosius, with his Christian authority) over another that many perceived as historically accurate (the *Epitome*, introduced as a 'historia Alexandri magni' at the beginning of this manuscript).

Moreover, this use of Orosius imbues the Alexander of the Royal manuscript with the unsettling historical reality of his ascendancy to power, as if the mention of a trembling world and overturned kingdoms offers the perspective not of the conqueror but of the conquered, those victims not always culpable or otherwise deserving of such a grim outcome. The old animosity between Persia and Macedon gave Alexander due cause to 'seize up arms' against them, but once he achieved that particular conquest, the other casualties, the world and its unnamed kingdoms, lay subject to the advancing king's whims. As a result, there is the underlying sense in the tripartite epitaph that with Persia behind him (the first statement), nothing remained to halt Alexander's worldwide dominion (the last statement) except death itself (the middle four verses). On the folio, this epitaph gains an even stronger indication of ominous finality, for immediately after it the scribe completes his work with the notice 'Finit liber' ('Here ends the book'). Clearly, then, the first seventy-eight folios, encompassing the *Epitome*, focusing on Alexander's childhood, the war against Persia, and his death, the *Epistola*, chronicling his adventures in India and the prophecy of his death, and the epitaph were intended to comprise a comprehensive book on Alexander.

²³ Orosius, *Historiarum adversum paganos*, ed. by Zangemeister, 3. 23: 'Igitur Alexander per duodecim annos trementem sub se orbem ferro pressit'. The Orosian interpolation is also found in BL, MS Cotton Titus A. xxvii; BL, MS Royal 15. C. vi, and Cambridge, CUL, MS Mm. 5. 29 of the twelfth century; BL, MS Royal 12. C. iv, BL, MS Cotton Galba E. xi, and Cambridge, Pembroke Coll., MS 258 of the thirteenth century; and BL, MS Harley 5054 of the fifteenth century.

*The Second Scribe: The Collatio Alexandri cum Dindimo
and the Parva Recapitulatio*

As argued throughout this chapter, however, the second scribe of the Royal manuscript did not share this view of his predecessor's contributions, yet his additions do not merely supplement the first book with a broader view of both Alexander's character and Macedonian history. Although the import of such contributions cannot be understated in this study, the second scribe also imbues the manuscript with a critical, particularly Christian voice that contradicts the tone and content alike of the first book. He achieves this with texts that had long circulated in Anglo-Saxon England, as well as with a Jewish perspective of Alexander that was becoming increasingly available and would considerably influence the conqueror's reception in the twelfth and thirteenth century. The consultation of such sources grants the Royal manuscript a transitional stature. From the late eleventh century onward, as more and more dissenting voices entered the debate, Alexander's heroic reputation earned from the corpus of romance narratives failed to convey his legacy either comprehensively or accurately, and the first attempt to remedy such failure occurs in the second scribe's contributions.

Specifically, this criticism of Alexander begins with the *Collatio Alexandri cum Dindimo*. Like the *Epistola*, the *Collatio* begins with innocuous intentions that quickly yield to a different agenda altogether. George Cary has traced the curiously malleable reception of the *Collatio* as a text originally intended as an attack on Alexander but soon adapted in such manners that it became a mocking critique of the bombastic Dindimus and then edited anew into an assault on Alexander's materialism and belligerence.²⁴ As for the copy in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, its date, tone, and codicological context place it squarely within the first stage of the *Collatio*'s development.²⁵ Dindimus may write with a striking aggressiveness for modern readers, but the second scribe of this manuscript leaves no doubt that he adheres, with both this text and the *Parva recapitulatio*, to the Christian condemnation of Alexander. Several early Christians, including Jerome, considered, for example, the Brahmans as 'a fit subject for admiration', and some even wrote favourable studies of the Brahman lifestyle,²⁶ while

²⁴ Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, pp. 13–14.

²⁵ According to Leclercq, 'Les Manuscrits de l'abbaye d'Hautmont', p. 62, the copy of the *Collatio* in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I belongs to a relatively rare recension, including Clervaux, Bibliothèque de l'Abbaye, MS 1, BL, MS Royal 15. C. vi, and BL, MS Stowe 56.

²⁶ Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, p. 92.

Alexander earned the ire of these writers, particularly Orosius, whose account of a war-mongering tyrant serves as the foundation for the *Parva recapitulatio*. As a result, Dindimus, with his paradisiacal account of his people and their strict monotheism, is the unequivocal representative of asceticism and a harmonious existence within nature and alongside his followers, while Alexander is an entirely justified target of criticism.

Alexander begins the correspondence by writing the philosopher with a certain pride in his own nobility and wondering if the Brahman philosophy may one day welcome him as a follower. Indeed, Alexander's respect for the Indian's 'excellens [...] industria' ('outstanding discipline') that exceeds other philosophers seemingly confirms his sincerity,²⁷ but from the first lines of his response Dindimus draws a clear and disparaging distinction between the Brahman's 'pura et simplici uita uiuit' ('pure and simple lifestyle') and Alexander's own belligerent one.²⁸ In the philosopher's mind, Alexander, regardless of his presumptions of his enlightened rule, is led on his endless campaigns by his desire for wealth and treasure:

Uos estis malorum omnium causa mortalium. Uos Asiam et Libiam breuibus concludi finibus affirmatis. Uos solis meatum trepidare facitis dum cursus sui terminos armis disquirat Alexander [...]. Uos pias patrum dextras natorum iugulis scelerastis. Uos in maternum concubitum uerecundos iuuenes ipsa Cupidine stupente duxistis. Uos in superbiam reges mitissimos incitastis quibus cum terrarum spatia minime sufficere suadetis poli querere sedes hortamini.

You [wealth] are the cause of all evils among mortal men. You assert that Asia and Libya are confined by narrow boundaries. You make the path of the sun tremble, while Alexander inquires with his armies into the limits of its course [...]. You defile the pious hands of fathers on the throats of their sons. You lead bashful sons to sleep with their mothers, so that Cupid himself would be astonished. You incite the kindest of kings to pride, you persuade them that earthly limits are nowhere near sufficient, and you encourage them to seek the seats of heaven.²⁹

Such an unexpected attack from the philosopher baits Alexander into a war of words and an increasingly dismissive attitude. From his perspective, Dindimus is a charlatan, a man whose ideology the conqueror deems 'dementie potius quam philosophie' ('more dementia than philosophy') and whose refusal to

²⁷ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 79^r.

²⁸ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 80^r.

²⁹ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 83^r–83^v.

codify laws and study letters he dismisses as a waste of human potential.³⁰ Alexander's apparent hostility may not seem so unwarranted (Dindimus leans, after all, on the side of condescension), but for an eleventh-century reader, the Brahman's disregard for the conqueror's earthly stature and condemnation of Alexander's obsession with making war and building an empire represent the standard Christian stance against him, as assessed above.

Moreover, Dindimus expresses a common moralistic attack on a conqueror who overestimates the extent of his authority: 'Nos [...] non sumus incole huius mundi, sed aduene. Nec ita in orbem terrarum uenimus, ut in eo libeat consistere, sed transire' ('We are strangers, not inhabitants, in this world, and as such we do not come into this world to take pleasure in staying here but to pass through it').³¹ Even the *Epitome*, the chief vehicle of Alexander romance, concludes, as seen above, with the irony that poisoned wine killed so mighty a conqueror, and this irony also haunts Alexander in India, as the *Epistola* relates, and informs the epitaph in the Royal manuscript. Yet such fanciful treatments of his career also attest to Alexander's determination to establish a global empire, unparalleled dominion, and an eternal legacy, as well as to his success in doing so. Dindimus's attack demonizes such an agenda and refutes the efficacy and permanence of the Macedonian Empire and its fragile framework of victors and vanquished united by one man's ambition in the face of a spiritual, eternal afterlife. This Brahman philosopher articulates, in sum, a Christian dismissal of Alexander's accomplishments and judgment of his belligerence, an attitude that stands a far cry from the heroic portrayal in the first two items of this manuscript and their account of how this empire was built. This text thus introduces a traditional moral stance against Alexander into the manuscript, but it relies on this tradition to reject the tone, not necessarily the content, of romances like the *Epitome* and the elevated status that Alexander had earned therein. The next item in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, the *Parva recapitulatio*, proves, however, that the second scribe was aware of the need to challenge the veracity of such narratives as well, despite — and very likely because of — the prominence of romances at the time.

³⁰ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 89^v.

³¹ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 90^r.

The 'True History' of Alexander

That the *Parva recapitulatio de eodem Alexandro et de suis* (*A Brief Summary of the Same Alexander and his Men*) serves as both an addendum and corrigendum for the texts that precede it, particularly the *Epitome*, is evidenced by its opening sentences. If the *Collatio cum Dindimo*, the scribe's first addition to the Alexander 'liber' in the manuscript, aims to castigate the conqueror's martial lifestyle, then this second addition is clearly intended to correct some of the fabrications and historical oversights of the *Epitome*. The scribe understood, that is, that one had to consider Macedonian history both before and after Alexander and to maintain a critical stance towards texts that were advertised as 'historiae'. Indeed, the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor's distinction of 'hystoriographi' ('historiographers') and 'uera hystoria' ('true history'), both indicative of authority over the earlier narratives in the manuscript, provides extremely useful insight into the state of Alexander texts in England. Such terminology may also provide a rare clue as to the origin of the *Parva recapitulatio* (and perhaps even the Royal manuscript, if this represents the original copy of the addendum), or at least the influences behind it. The recent publication of the St Augustine's, Canterbury volume for the *Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues* series sheds particular light on the classification of the *Parva recapitulatio*'s two sources, Orosius and Josephus, by identifying them as 'historiographi' (along with Freulf of Lisieux, Sallust, and Gildas), the same term found in the Royal manuscript for those who present, as provided below, a credible narrative of Alexander's birth.³² Although the base manuscript for this edition of the catalogue dates to the late fifteenth century, its editors identify it as the culmination of 'a document which had first been compiled some generations earlier', and the aforementioned designation of Orosius and Josephus are decisions 'most likely reflecting [the catalogue's] earlier state at exemplar stage'.³³ Moreover, the cataloguing of manuscripts simply entitled 'historiae' includes the Valerius *Epitome* and the *Epistola ad Aristotelem* in combination, and those whose titles begin with 'gesta' include the *Epitome* and other Latin Alexander romances.³⁴ The St Augustine's cataloguers distinguished, then, their select group of 'histori-

³² Barker-Benfield, ed., *St Augustine's Abbey*, II, 917. Laistner, *The Intellectual Heritage of the Early Middle Ages*, p. 4, traces the prestige of Josephus and Orosius within monastic circles to Cassiodorus's list of 'De historicis Christianis', which includes both writers.

³³ Barker-Benfield, ed., *St Augustine's Abbey*, I, p. xi.

³⁴ Barker-Benfield, ed., *St Augustine's Abbey*, II, 927–28, 941–42.

ographi' from their larger collection of anonymous 'historiae' of Alexander, the same attitude that the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor maintains in imposing the authority of Orosius and Josephus Flavius on the first two items in the manuscript. BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I began as just such an anonymous 'historia' of Alexander, as announced by its incipit, but the *Parva recapitulatio* presents an explicit counter-argument: the *Epitome* and the *Epistola* do not merit credence, but the 'hystoriographi' Orosius and Josephus do.

Not only does this stance identify which episodes from the historical tradition attracted writers and readers for over four centuries, from the Royal manuscript to the fifteenth-century Middle English translation of the *Parva recapitulatio*, but it also (to reverse this perspective) singles out what must have been viewed as inherent flaws in legendary accounts.³⁵ The *Parva recapitulatio* consists of three segments, the first of which refutes the story of Alexander's conception found in the *Epitome* and the latter two of which have no counterpart in that popular narrative: (1) that, despite suggestions to the contrary, Alexander's father was Philip of Macedon, (2) that Alexander visited Jerusalem, where the Jews received him in friendship and explained to him the prophecy of his conquest of Persia in the book of Daniel, and (3) that his successors engaged in civil wars for years after his death and dismembered his empire. This addendum marks, then, a clear attempt to correct the falsehoods of popular texts like the *Epitome*, wherein Alexander's father was an Egyptian sorcerer, the conqueror had no relevance for Judeo-Christian history, and his life (from his scandalous conception to his poisoning) was story enough. Moreover, the *Parva recapitulatio* represents the earliest surviving endeavour in England to seek out a wider historical understanding of Alexander and how he, his father, and their empire fit into the larger scheme of Antiquity. That the text survives in five other copies as well as a vernacular translation, coupled with the chrono-

³⁵ The other manuscripts in which the *Parva recapitulatio* survives are all of English origin: BL, MS Royal 15. C. vi (twelfth century), BL, MS Cotton Cleopatra D. v (thirteenth century), and BL, MS Harley 5054 (fifteenth century); Cambridge, CUL, MS Mm. 5. 29 (twelfth century) and Cambridge, CUL, MS Dd. 10. 24 (fifteenth century). Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. by Wright, iv (1991), 26–27 adds Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 98 (late thirteenth or early fourteenth century). Ross, 'Parva recapitulatio: An English Collection of Texts Relating to Alexander the Great', edits the Latin version, and Hill, 'The Middle English and Latin Versions of the *Parva recapitulatio*', edits the Middle English translation, which survives in Worcester, Cathedral Library, MS F. 172. See also *The Middle English Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, ed. by DiMarco and Perelman, and Hahn, 'The Middle English Letter of Alexander to Aristotle'.

logical range of the Latin codices, indicates the wide and enduring reception of this work in late medieval England.

The *Parva recapitulatio*'s inclusion in the Royal manuscript places the codex at a crossroads of Alexander's Insular reception, for it represents both the terminal point of the Anglo-Saxon treatment of Alexander and the earliest evidence of a post-Conquest re-evaluation of his career. The first of the *Parva recapitulatio*'s sources, Orosius's *Historiae adversum paganos*, exerted a considerable influence on Anglo-Saxon notions of the past, as discussed above, but by the time BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 was produced in the late eleventh century, Orosius's narrative was soon to be eclipsed by another Roman text, the *Philippic Histories*, and thus represented an antiquated history of Macedon. The second 'hystoriographus', Josephus Flavius (translated by Cassiodorus) also represents, however, the changing taste for and transmission of histories in post-Conquest England. Although Josephus may very well have circulated in England before 1066, the surviving copies of English origin date to the second half of the eleventh century and the twelfth century, a period of increased copying and dissemination of such historical works.³⁶ That the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor saw in Orosius the solution to two basic quandaries — the identity of Alexander's father and the fate of the Macedonian empire after Alexander's death — is clear, but in Josephus he was evidently attracted to a novel episode that equally informed the Judeo-Christian conception of Alexander. Moreover, the innovative nature of such inquiries into the story of Alexander is the first of

³⁶ Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 317 lists two copies of the *Jewish Antiquities*: the eleventh- or twelfth-century Durham, Cathedral Library, MS B. II. 1 (belonging to the priory of St Cuthbert in Durham) and BL, MS Royal 13. A. XXII of the second half of the eleventh century (belonging to St Augustine's, Canterbury, but produced at Mont Saint-Michel). He also cites the *Jewish Antiquities* in a booklist (c. 1100), possibly from Peterborough, in Lapidge, 'Surviving Booklists from Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 76–77. Ker, *The Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, pp. 29, 101 adds two twelfth-century copies: Cambridge, CUL, MS Dd. 1. 4 (from Holy Trinity or Christ Church, Canterbury) and Glasgow, University Library, MS Hunterian 4 (from the priory of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lode). Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England*, pp. 24–25, 56 isolates Josephus as an 'essential' classical text at the turn of the twelfth century and adds in turn Cambridge, Trinity Hall, MS 4 (from Monkland Priory in Herefordshire). The availability of Josephus's text and its interpolation in the BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 are best contextualized, then, within the growth of English book production and collecting in the late eleventh and early twelfth century, especially regarding books popular on the Continent; see Webber, 'The Patristic Content of English Book Collections', pp. 197–99. In support of this, Nortier, *Les Bibliothèques médiévales des abbayes Bénédictines*, p. 219 lists nine eleventh- and twelfth-century copies of the *Jewish Antiquities* from Norman abbeys.

its kind and anticipates those of twelfth-century monastic chroniclers, who had the benefit of a wider transmission of classical histories.

The *Parva recapitulatio* thus reads as an earnest investigation into historical sources as a means of correcting texts like the *Epitome*, and the redactor begins with the most pervasive fallacy of Alexander romances in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, as italicized below:

Tempore quo hic Alexander natus legitur sicut ab hystoriographis fertur nox tendi ad plurimam diei partem uisa est et saxea de nubibus grando descendens ueris terram lapidibus uerberauit. Nec mirum si mira portendi sunt uisa tali nascente uiro uere magno non pietate sed miseriarum enormitate et atrocissimo totius orientis turbine. Hic Alexander secundum ueram hystoriam Philippi et Olimpiadis fuit filius Aristotelis philosophi et Nectanebi phisici discipulus cuius etiam falso creditus est filius propter familiaritatem nimiam quam filii karissimi gratia habebat Olympias ad ipsum Nectanebum et propter studii precipuam diligentiam quam Nectanebus exercuerat in Alexandro matris sue pio instinctu. Unde etiam sicut fertur hic idem Nectanebus animositate adolescentis discipuli interiit dum quadam uice equo asperius discipline intuitu in eum exarsisset. Philippus itaque Alexandri pater filius habebatur Amin et Olympias mater eiusdem soror erat Alexandri Epyrotarum regis.

As reported by historiographers, when this Alexander was born, night seemed to extend through to the end of daytime, and stone-like hail fell from the clouds and struck the earth with veritable rocks. It should come as no surprise, however, that wondrous portents were witnessed upon the birth of such a man, who was great not in his piety but in the enormity of miseries wrought by him, that most atrocious whirlwind of the entire East. *According to true history, this Alexander was the son of Philip and Olympias, and he was the student of the philosopher Aristotle and the scientist Nectanabus. He was falsely believed to have been the son of the latter man, on account of the excessive familiarity between him and Olympias for the sake of her dearest son, as well as the extraordinary diligence in studies that Nectanabus exerted on Alexander, who was impelled by his devotion to his mother. Hence it was also said that this Nectanabus was killed because of his young student's animosity, for on a certain occasion the teacher had railed against him with a look more vehement than that merited in teaching.* Philip, Alexander's father, was recognized as the son of Amyntas, and Olympias, his mother, was the sister of Alexander, king of the Epirotans.³⁷

The redactor immediately draws a distinction between reliable history ('ab hystoriographis' and 'secundam ueram hystoriam') and unreliable reports (the source behind 'falso creditus est'), and he uses his primary historiographer, Orosius, to correct one of the most egregious claims of Alexander romances.

³⁷ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fols 94^v–95^v.

Re-establishing Philip as Alexander's father represents, however, only one aim of the passage. The redactor also offers his own explanation for the credence lent to the story that Nectanabus fathered Alexander and subverts the omens and portents that are so much a fabric of the *Epitome*. Here, rather than presaging the glory and extent of Alexander's empire, which is the purpose of these omens in the romance, the wondrous conditions foretell the 'miseries' that the 'most atrocious whirlwind of the entire East' will wreak on the world. In interpolating Orosius, the redactor denies the child's 'piety', as the young Alexander grows up to murder his teacher for his severity, and his true biological father proves himself to be a highly problematic figure and an unjustified recipient of filial devotion. Orosius holds Philip, the father whose political footsteps Alexander followed, as a despicable leader in his own right, and the *Parva recapitulatio* repeats his ominous assessment of one tyrant's succession of another: Alexander, in his assessment, was more vigorous, stronger, and crueller than his father, and even more severe against his own men than his enemies.³⁸ Moreover, just as Philip grew mentally unstable with his own consolidation of power, so Alexander would devolve into an often irrational tyrant. Like his father, his volatility would grow in proportion to the extent of his dominion, and like his father, Alexander would merit punishment for his crimes in the interpretation of history as a vehicle for moral warnings.

Indeed, for the *Parva recapitulatio*, the value of excavating the historical circumstances of Alexander, his family, and his successors clearly lies in the moral context of Macedonian's fall and the explication of the proper punishment for all guilty parties. First, Alexander, denigrated as a prodigious tyrant earlier in the addendum, now has his murder told from a different perspective. While the *Epitome* explores the plot to poison Alexander, the *Parva recapitulatio* deflects a portion of the blame for this affair onto the king himself:

Ubi eum expectabant Italici et totius orientis legati quibus tantus timor rerum ab eo gestarum invaserat ut inde peregrinam cerneret toto mundo legationem quo uix crederes peruenire potuisse de eo rumorem. Ergo male castigata auuiditate cum

³⁸ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, fol. 95^v: 'Uerum Philippus cum humanis decessisset rebus ei in regno successit Alexander filius strenuo strenuissimus forti fortissimus crudeli crudelissimus qui tam in domesticos quam in extraneos erat seuerissimus et nulli pepercerat quos uel honori uel uoluntati sue rebelles senserat' ('When Philip died, his son Alexander succeeded him in the [Macedonian] kingdom. A very vigorous, strong, and cruel son — one who was as exceedingly harsh towards his countrymen as he was to strangers and who spared no one whom he sensed was rebelling against him out of a sense of honor or their own volition — succeeded a vigorous, strong, and cruel father').

adhuc sanguinem sitiret apud Babylonem per familiarissimos suos dato ueneni poculo anno etatis sue tricesimo secundo, postquam dominus orbis terrarum appellatus [...] postquam duodecim annis trementem sub se orbem ferro pressit interiit.

There [in Babylon] legates from Italy and all of the Orient were awaiting Alexander, and so great a fear over his successes had come over them that you would have seen a legation traveling there from the entire world, places where you would scarcely believe that rumours of him were able to reach. Therefore with his vehemence hardly curbed, he was still thirsting for blood when at Babylon among those closest to him he was killed by a poisoned drink in the thirty-second year of his life. After having been called lord of the world and after having suppressed it trembling at his sword for twelve years, he died.³⁹

In these statements, Alexander is punished for his ambition and aggression. The notion that he died after being designated a world conqueror whose martial grip lasted for twelve years occurs much later in Orosius, and its inclusion at this point in the *Parva recapitulatio* underscores the criminality, and thus due justice, inherent in Alexander's last days.⁴⁰ Having oppressed the world for much of his reign, he still spreads fear throughout new lands and still thirsts for blood. Therefore — and the adverb 'ergo' added to Orosius's statement conveys a grave death sentence upon Alexander's ambition — he is killed in Babylon, even as he plans new slaughter. As this ambition becomes grotesque, no longer is Alexander simply the victim of one man's (Antipater) treachery. Rather, as a source of universal misery, he practically dares a fearful coalition of nations to defy him, just as his father did before him. If one accepts such a view as historically accurate, then the central pathos of the *Epitome*, the victimization of Alexander, must be sacrificed.

The 'True History' of the Macedonian Empire

However, such an atmosphere, tinged with blood and guilt, continued after Alexander's reign as well, as the compiler soon addresses the vindication of other crimes among the Macedonians. He composes his broad historical survey by rearranging two instances of crime and punishment from Orosius. First, the Christian historiographer's metaphor of Alexander as a lion, whose whelps (his

³⁹ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 97^v.

⁴⁰ Orosius, *Historiarum adversum paganos*, ed. by Zangemeister, 3. 20: 'Alexander vero apud Babylonam, cum adhuc sanguinem sitiens male castigata aviditate ministri insidiis venenum potasset, interiit.'

successors) rip apart his bounty after his death and eventually slaughter each other in their attempts to win the largest share, establishes the culpability of the conqueror's survivors in the demise of the empire.⁴¹ Secondly, however, the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor places Alexander's royal family (his mother Olympias, his son Hercules, and his widow) at the centre of these wars. The murders of all three, largely unknown in romance, would become key moments for historians and chroniclers interested in the line of Macedonian royalty. Olympias, as seen above, is an unsettling character in the *Epitome* earlier in the manuscript, particularly in her excitement at Nectanabus's promise of a divine child who would win her revenge for Philip's attempt to marry another woman. However, she leaves the narrative after Philip's murder and only reappears in the manuscript when Alexander hears the prophecy of her death. The *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor fulfils this prophecy in explaining Olympias's violent end:

Inter quos Cassander Macedonum princeps Olimpiadem Alexandri regis matrem persecutus est eo quod multas in Grece principes cedes et crudelitates egerit. Captam ergo occidit et Herculem Alexandri filium paruulum cum matre sua Roxa Darii regis Persarum filia custodiendum in arcem Amphipolitanam misit nam et ipsos cum Olimpiade ceperat.

Among [the successors] Cassander, the leader of the Macedonians, persecuted King Alexander's mother Olympias, because she had committed many murders and cruelties against the Greek noblemen. Therefore, when she had been captured, he killed her. Having seized them along with Olympias, he sent Alexander's young son Hercules and his mother Roxane (daughter of the Persian King Darius) to the fortress at Amphipolitana to be placed under guard.⁴²

Charged with unspecified crimes against Macedonian nobles, Olympias's sentence is swift and seemingly deserved ('therefore he killed her').⁴³ Although the

⁴¹ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, fol. 98^r: 'Quo mortuo [Alexandro] Macedonum principes diueras sortiti sunt prouincias et ueluti opimam predam a magno leone prostratam audi discerpere catuli seque ipsos inuicem in rixam irritatos prede emulatione fregerunt et mutuis bellis sese consumpserunt' ('After Alexander died, the leaders of Macedon divided up his various provinces, and just as ravenous cubs tear apart sumptuous prey killed by a great lion, they crushed themselves in civil wars').

⁴² BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, fol. 98^v.

⁴³ Although Hill, 'The Middle English and Latin Versions of the *Parva recapitulatio*', p. 20 more recently maintains 'Captam [Olympiadem] vero occidit [Cassander]', the *lectio maior* occurs in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1; BL, MS Cotton Cleopatra D. v; BL, MS Harley 5054; BL,

compiler does not list these ‘murders and cruelties,’ anyone who has read the *Epitome* earlier in the codex will understand how suspect a character Olympias was both during Alexander’s conception and accession to the throne, and here she is no less so after his death. In the *Parva recapitulatio*, she leads a coup to gain power for herself, fails to protect Alexander’s son, and is associated with the demise of another (potential) king. Olympias is no protector, nor does her death invite pity, as does the subsequent mention of Hercules, killed at fourteen because Cassander feared popular support for him as the legitimate king of Macedon.⁴⁴ Rather, as the redactor follows the blood quickly seeping across Macedon, Olympias serves him as another culprit of criminal ambition, and building a crescendo in his moral warning, he deftly links her fall to that of her murderer, Cassander, and the other successors. In this careful *recapitulatio* of Macedonian history after Alexander, a mutual understanding of both the threat and punishment of ambition and power struggles arises:

Deinde ipse Cassander paruo post tempore uiuens defungitur simulque omnes Alexandri regis duces triginta et quatuor numero uix quatuordecim [the final folio of the text is missing in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I; the following is from BL, MS Royal 15. C. VI, fol. 130^v] annis in omnibus substiterunt miseriarum enormitatibus inuicem inuidentes inuicem prouocantes et turpiter adinuicem morientes. Et qui arbitrabantur totius mundi terminos sibi angustos fore sic infra breue tempus et magnus ille qui dicitur Alexander et magni illi principes successores interierunt suis ipsis armis.

Thereafter Cassander died, after living just a little while longer. All of King Alexander’s officers, thirty-four total, withstood the totality and enormity of their miseries for scarcely fourteen years. They were envious of each other, they provoked each other, and they shamefully died together. So they who thought the ends of the world were too narrow for them — that Alexander called ‘the Great’ and his mighty leaders and successors — died by each other’s arms within a brief amount of time.⁴⁵

There can be no doubting Orosius’s condemnation of Alexander and his successors (the source for this passage), but by associating the lot of them with

MS Royal 15. C. VI; and Cambridge, CUL, MS Dd. 10. 24 (‘Captam ergo occidit’).

⁴⁴ See BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 98^v: ‘Processu uero temporis cum iam quatuordecim esset annorum puer Hercules timens Cassander ne eum quasi legitimum sibi regem populus deposceret et preficeret simul cum matre sua occidere tacite curauit’ (‘Some time later, when the boy Hercules was to turn fourteen, Cassander, who feared that people would demand and appoint him as their legitimate king, secretly arranged to kill the boy along with his mother’).

⁴⁵ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 98^v. Cf. Orosius, *Historiarum aduersum paganos*, ed. by Zangemeister, 3. 23.

pride and futile ambition at the end of his own narrative, the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor anticipates subsequent efforts to criticize Macedonian *imperium*. Monastic writers in the following century would examine Macedon, now no longer defined only by Alexander's career, by its extended past of bloodshed and internal strife over an entire lineage of rulers, and indeed the punishment of all of them is at the centre of historical understanding in the *Parva recapitulatio*.

However, the redactor does not only foretell the twelfth-century view of Macedon's self-inflicted fall, for in incorporating Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, he also anticipates one of the fundamental episodes of the conqueror's Jewish reception. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this episode would soon flourish as a means of situating Alexander both within the Judeo-Christian framework of history and in the classical world's stemma of Eastern rulers. Composed originally by Josephus Flavius in his *Jewish Antiquities* and transmitted in medieval England by a Latin translation by Cassiodorus, the scene associates Alexander's visit to the city with his kindly treatment of the Jews.⁴⁶ In Josephus's account, God sends Alexander a dream vision of Jaddus, the priest of Jerusalem, who announces the Macedonian's impending conquest of Persia, and when Alexander later bows to the Jewish clerics outside of the city, they read for him the prophecy of Daniel and assure him that his victory over the Persians is foretold therein. Alexander twice appears anonymously in these visions, which medieval commentators traditionally interpreted following the model of Jerome. In the first vision, Daniel sees four beasts, the third of which is a four-winged and four-headed leopard.⁴⁷ Jerome reads the vision as an allegory of Macedon, with the four wings signifying Alexander's swift conquests and the four heads his four successors,⁴⁸ and he similarly interprets the second

⁴⁶ Hill, 'The Middle English and Latin Versions of the *Parva recapitulatio*', and Ross, '*Parva recapitulatio*: An English Collection of Texts Relating to Alexander the Great', assert that Rufinus's Latin translation was the source for the Jerusalem episode in the *Parva recapitulatio*, yet the only surviving copies of the *Jewish Antiquities* from eleventh-century England are Cassiodorus's translation.

⁴⁷ Daniel 7. 6 (Douay-Rheims): 'post hoc aspicebam et ecce alia quasi pardus et alas habebat avis quattuor super se et quattuor capita erant in bestia et potestas data est ei' ('After this I beheld, lo, another like a leopard, and it had upon it four wings as of a fowl, and the beast had four heads, and power was given to it').

⁴⁸ Jerome, *Commentarii in Daniele*, ed. by Migne, col. 529: 'Tertium regnum Macedonum. Et alas habebat quatuor. Nihil enim Alexandri victoria velocius fuit, qui ab Illyrico, et Adriatico mari usque ad Indicum Oceanum, et Gangem fluvium, non tam praeliis, quam victoriis, et in sex annis partem Europae, et omnem sibi Asiam subjugavit. Quatuor autem capita eosdem dicit duces eius, qui postea successores regni exstiterunt, Ptolomaeum, Seleucum, Philippum,

vision, in which a goat (Alexander) kills a ram (Darius III) before growing so powerful ('*magnus factus est nimis*') that its large horn is replaced by four smaller ones (the four successors).⁴⁹ When Alexander hears these prophecies — excepting, of course, the ominous tones of the last one — he happily grants the Jews certain political rights not possessed under Persian rule. From a Jewish perspective, the episode thus explains how both parties achieve their political agenda (the promise of peace for the Jews and the promise of victory in Persia for Alexander), and from a Christian perspective, particularly the monastic culture that created the *Parva recapitulatio*, the episode links biblical exegesis and classical historiography.

The version of the story in this addendum also represents, however, how the episode could be appropriated for a critical view of Alexander not intended by Josephus but certainly analogous to the conqueror's portrayal in Orosius and the *Parva recapitulatio* as a whole. In the *Jewish Antiquities*, the visit to Jerusalem is framed by the Jews' initial anxiety towards the encroaching Macedonian and his army and their ultimate relief at his joy and generosity. The *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor reduces the narrative, however, to focus upon Alexander's emotions, and taken out of the historical context of its original narrative, the story attests to the conqueror's desire to serve only his own interests. After a lengthy description of Alexander's deference to the Jewish priests, one of his men asks the conqueror to explain his curious behaviour, to which he replies that the Jewish God sent to him the head priest in a dream and that '*Per ipsum [deum] etiam Darii et virtutem solui Persarum et quicquid animo meo uoluo per eum prouenturum mihi confido*' ('through him both Darius and the strength of the Persians would be destroyed, and I am confident that whatever I am thinking in my mind will come to pass through him').⁵⁰ These self-serving

Antigonum' ('The third kingdom is that of Macedon. And it had four wings. Nothing was swifter than Alexander's victory; from the Illyrian and the Adriatic sea all the way to the Indian Ocean and the Ganges, he subjugated — not so much in battle as by victory — all of Asia and part of Europe in six years. The four heads signify his leaders, who were the successors to his kingdom: Ptolemy, Seleucus, Philip, and Antigone'). Reliance on this prophecy and the portrayal of Alexander in 1 Maccabees to contextualize Alexander's place in history was widespread in the European Middle Ages; see Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance*, pp. 164–68.

⁴⁹ See Jerome, *Commentarii in Daniele*, ed. by Migne, col. 536. Jerome is silent on the phrase '*magnus factus est nimis*', which seems a moment ripe for criticism; rather, he offers the facts of Alexander's sudden death at the age of thirty-two and the division of his empire ('Alexander, quo tricesimo secundo aetatis suae anno, surrexerunt pro eo quatuor duces eius').

⁵⁰ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I, fol. 96^v.

last words do not appear in the Latin translation of the *Jewish Antiquities* that circulated in England, nor is there a source for Alexander's exhilaration when the priests interpret for him the passage in Daniel:

Ventum est eo loci [*sic*] quo lectum est quendam sue gentis principem pessundari debere omnem Persarum potentiam. Quod rex exhilarans ad se conuertit nulli melius hoc conuenire quam sibi affirmans utpote his propheticis oraculis multa simillima accitans. Hoc idem ipsi sacerdotes et honorati Iudeorum plures affirmando contestati sunt. Deinde rex letior factus [...]. Quod eis libentissime rex concessit tam pro ostensa sibi uisione quam pro prophetia Danihelis eum instigante ad quod intenderat ardentissime.

They came to the place where it was read that a certain leader of his people [i.e., the Macedonians] would destroy all of Persia's might. Alexander, joyous at this prophecy, mulled over this privately and knew that it would turn out better for no one than himself, as he called to mind many things similar to these prophetic oracles. The priests and several noblemen of the Jews attested that the prophecy was true, which made the king happier [...]. Very willingly he conceded [their request for ancestral rights and seven years' freedom from tribute], as much for the dream vision shown to him as for the prophecy in Daniel that stirred him with thoughts of that for which he had most ardently yearned.⁵¹

The allegory of the beasts in Daniel provides a certain, preordained lineage of emperors and empires, and in Jerome's well-known reading a clear design of history emerges, in which Philip first expands Macedon, his son Alexander merges it with a vanquished Persia, and his death in turn engenders four competing empires led by his former officers. In the passage above, however, the interpretation of Daniel's vision is clearly centred upon the transition of power from Darius to Alexander, rather than the demise that awaits the Macedonian as well. His egotistic desires for conquest and happiness over the priests' declaration echo Augustine's interpretation of the story as a pagan's farce of piety, and Alexander's reaction highlights his ignorance of the full prophecy (namely that he, like Darius, will suddenly lose his empire).⁵²

⁵¹ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, fol. 97^r–97^v. In the Latin Josephus, Alexander shows significantly less emotion at the scene. See Cassiodorus's translation in Josephus, *Opera*, printed by Johann Schüssler (Augsburg, 1470), bk XI, ch. 8: 'arbitratus seipsum esse quem scriptura significabat, gavisus est' ('When he thought that the writings referred to himself, he rejoiced').

⁵² Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. by Dods, 18. 45, criticizes Alexander's show of piety in Jerusalem: 'Alexander, indeed, offered up sacrifices in the temple of God, not as a convert to His worship in true piety, but thinking, with impious folly, that He was to be worshipped along with false gods'.

As a result, he is blinded to the violent events that conclude the *Parva recapitulatio*, whose redactor concerns himself with the framework of Macedonian history and lineage from Philip to Alexander's own successors. To preserve this line of kings, he disproves the popular belief that Alexander was the illegitimate son of an exiled Egyptian pharaoh-sorcerer, as credence in such a rumour would have disrupted the continuity of empires so authoritatively presented in Daniel's allegory and Jerome's interpretation of it. This tale regarding Nectanabus had to be corrected to accord with the authoritative Judeo-Christian account of the Macedonian empire and its transition from father to son, and the *Parva recapitulatio* thus begins by emphasizing the relationship between Philip and Alexander and the fallacy of Nectanabus's supposed paternity. Alexander was not, according to the redactor, the heroic son of a sorcerer but the tyrannical son of a tyrannical father. Throughout this addendum and corrigendum, then, he insists that an alternative tradition, that of the 'historiographi' Orosius and Josephus Flavius, exists outside of the parameters of the Valerius *Epitome* at the beginning of the codex. That text, confined to the relatively short timeline between Alexander's birth and death, offers both falsehoods and a myopic view of history, and in his attempts to widen the scope of how one should consider Macedon within a greater historical framework and, more importantly, pass moral judgment on the widespread transgressions of that empire, the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor begins an intellectual investigation that would soon flourish among the English Benedictines.

THE BENEDICTINES AND ALEXANDER IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

When the English chronicler Nicholas Trevet reached the career of Alexander the Great in his early-fourteenth-century universal history, the *Historia de origine mundi*, he recognized that accounting for the life and deeds of this extraordinary figure was no easy task. Before him lay two conflicting histories from which to choose, and Trevet asserted that one represented commonly held hearsay about Alexander, while the other offered something authoritative, factual, and historical. To make matters worse, his Franco-Latin source for this disparity, Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale*, did not offer any solution to the contradictions of competing histories but simply interwove them. At the core of this confusion was the long-standing literary tradition that the exiled pharaoh-sorcerer Nectanabus, rather than Philip of Macedon, had fathered Alexander. Such innuendo was nothing new to Alexander's reception, as discussed in the previous chapter, but Trevet's response to the controversy represents a key development in the English investigation into historical sources on the conqueror.

Following the methodology of the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor from three centuries earlier, Trevet identifies two sorts of histories and corrects the unreliable one first with a Christian authority:

Anno Philippi regis Macedonum sexto Nectanabi regis Egipti xi^o secundum Eusebium Alexander Philippi et Olympiadis filius nascitur. Huic non consonat illa uulgata hystoria Alexandri et Nectanabi conficta [que] narrat eum genitum Nectanabo iam extra regnum facto.

In the sixth year of Philip, king of the Macedonians, and the eleventh year of Nectanabus, the king of Egypt, Alexander — according to Eusebius [i.e., Jerome's Latin translation of his *Chronicle*] — was born as the son of Philip and Olympias. That popular, contrived history of Alexander and Nectanabus does not accord with this statement, for it relates that the boy was sired by Nectanabus after he had been exiled from his kingdom.¹

Trevet borrows this notion of a 'uulgata hystoria' ('popular history') from his source, but he recognizes on his own that not only is this version of events fallacious (that is, a 'conficta historia') but also that the story that Nectanabus fathered Alexander may have evolved from the ancient claim that a serpent was spotted flying across the sky on the night of Alexander's birth. To remedy the confusion, Trevet turns to a text of Augustan Rome, Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories*, which, as this chapter argues, had unequivocally altered the English reception of Alexander:

in hystoria illa ficta putamus nec secundum illam Alexandri gesta [...] nocte qua uir Alexandrum concepit narrat Iustinus libro XII visa per quietem est cum ingenti serpente uoluptari nec decepta sompno [Olympias] est nam profecto maius humana mortalitate utero tulit opus.

I believe the deeds of Alexander in that history are false and in disagreement with [the *Philippic Histories*] [...] Justin relates in his twelfth book how on the night that Alexander was conceived by her husband it seemed to the sleeping [Olympias] that she was entwined with a huge serpent; she was not deceived by a dream, however, for indeed she bore in her womb a child who exceeded the bounds of human mortality.²

It had long been reported that Nectanabus impregnated Olympias in the guise of a dragon, and the adjective with which Trevet dismisses this version of Alexander's birth, 'uulgata', can refer either to the family of Latin Alexander romances that had transmitted the story of Nectanabus for centuries or the scores of vernacular romances translated from these Latin sources and extremely popular in the fourteenth century.³ Both had promulgated this common conception of the ruler's life, which Trevet identifies as fiction, and by eradicat-

¹ BL, MS Royal 13. B. xvi, fol. 135^r. Trevet's history is unedited.

² BL, MS Royal 13. B. xvi, fol. 135^r–35^v.

³ Trevet's term may indeed incorporate both the classical sense of *vulgatus* ('common', 'popular', 'well-known') and the medieval nuance of 'vernacular'. By the fourteenth century, these senses were essentially synonymous with regards to the Alexander legend.

ing this popular notion of Alexander from his *Historia de origine mundi*, he maintains a uniquely English tradition dating to the *Parva recapitulatio* and its claims of 'uera hystoria'. In asserting a more truthful account of the Macedonian over more fanciful ones, Trevet also distinguishes himself from Continental writers who had earlier recognized these conflicting histories but chose merely to conflate, rather than amend, them.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for example, both Vincent of Beauvais (whom Trevet ultimately rejected as a credible historical source) and Ekkehard of Aura acknowledge in their widely read chronicles that they faced the problem of finding the semblance of truth within the plethora of Alexander narratives. Whereas in the opening passages to the fourth book of his *Speculum historiale*, Vincent oscillates between the story of Nectanabus and other fantastical episodes and various historical sources,⁴ Ekkehard goes even further in his refusal to affirm one version or the other. Unlike Vincent, who ignores all discrepancies, Ekkehard is keen on exploiting this confusion of sources and treating Alexander as an anthology, in which he could digest lively episodes in order to entertain his readers:

Sed quia idem Alexander multa mire peregrisse legitur, quae scire multi delectantur, libet de vita eius aliqua summatim decerpere, quibus delectationi querentium utcumque valeam satisfacere.

One may read that this Alexander performed many wondrous deeds, about which many people are delighted to know, but it pleased me to glean summarily from his life some of these deeds, with which I might satisfy those in search of entertainment.⁵

Anthologizing Alexander meant, however, occasionally distinguishing truth from fiction, and Ekkehard is not up to this task. Fearing a readership that would think him a liar because of discrepancies in his source-texts, he simply elects to record everything he found.⁶ A judicious reader could feasibly deter-

⁴ Although Vincent states Eusebius's authority, as does Trevet, in Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum quadruplex*, IV (1965), 4. 1, he then inexplicably announces 'Nunc igitur de exilio Nectanebi et ortu Alexandri historiam prosequamur' ('Let me now commence with this history of the exile of Nectanabus and the birth of Alexander'). If Trevet indeed relied on Vincent for his comparison of Eusebius with the *vulgata historia* of Alexander, then his utter refusal to lend credence to the latter, which informs a considerable portion of the *Speculum historiale*, is all the more revealing.

⁵ Ekkehard of Aura, *Chronicon Universale*, ed. by Pertz, p. 62.

⁶ Ekkehard of Aura, *Chronicon Universale*, ed. by Pertz, p. 69: 'ne quis me [...] arguat mendacii' ('lest anyone accuse me of lying').

mine what was the truth, but Ekkehard offers a more tantalizing option: the reader could decide what he *liked* the best.⁷ As long as the Alexander legend was a collection of fragmented and sometimes conflicting scenes, why, according to Ekkehart's methodology, should the author and reader alike not engage in the process of selective reading?

Writing in England over two hundred years later, Nicholas Trevet stands by his own editorial decision to disprove falsehoods and strike them from the record. The information in the sort of 'history' that promoted the paternity of Nectanabus was fallacious, and he constructed this portion of the *Historia ab origine mundi* not on an amalgamation of more and less desirable sources but on one alone, Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories*.⁸ Although his source for Macedonian history, which he cites verbatim and at length but has not been identified in modern scholarship, his singular reliance on Justin places Trevet's *Historia* within two English traditions of searching for alternative to Alexander romances and lending considerable authority to the *Philippic Histories*.⁹ By Trevet's day this text had come to redefine how English writers conceived of Alexander since the twelfth century.

The Philippic Histories in Twelfth-Century England

The transmission of the *Philippic Histories* is still associated with Continental routes, most notably those emanating from Carolingian and Italian circles,¹⁰ but recent research has challenged the notion that England remained predominantly ignorant of Justin until the Conquest and the subsequent influx of

⁷ Ekkehard of Aura, *Chronicon Universale*, ed. by Pertz, p. 69: 'prudens lector eligat, quid sibi de hiis maxime placeat' ('let the prudent reader choose what among these things he finds especially pleasing').

⁸ Pompeius Trogus wrote the original *Philippic Histories* in the Augustan age, and Justin abbreviated the work c. AD 200. Although Trogus's original plan for his narrative remains unknown, the epitome offers a history of non-Roman Hellenic, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern cultures. *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, trans. by Yardley, vol. 1, discusses the background of Trogus and Justin at length.

⁹ Here again, it is possible that Trevet borrows his opening words from Vincent, but the latter uses Justin sparingly amongst many sources. Dean, 'Nicholas Trevet', p. 338 argues that Peter Comestor, Augustine, Eusebius, and Bede are his primary sources. This oversight of Justin is perpetuated by Bunt, *Alexander the Great in the Literature of Medieval Britain*, p. 40.

¹⁰ See Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, pp. 197–99 for a discussion of the *Philippic Histories* in the Middle Ages.

books popular in Europe. Alcuin's reference to Pompeius Trogus (the author of the original *Philippic Histories* and the name frequently confused with Justin, who epitomized it) as one of the 'historici veteres' in the library of York provides the earliest proof that this account was read in Anglo-Saxon England, and two fragments of English origin survive, including a Northumbrian one that played a central role in transmitting Justin to the Carolingian realm, from where it disseminated throughout Western Europe.¹¹ It is entirely possible, then, that this history assumed to have but a barely perceptible presence in pre-Conquest England actually gained a foothold among Anglo-Saxon readers for its later influence in the twelfth century.¹² Such an influence involved, however, a slow process of transmission, and the *Philippic Histories* did not immediately replace the sources of the *Parva recapitulatio*, Orosius and Josephus, until the twelfth century, from which time one fragmentary and four complete manuscripts of English origin survive.¹³ It also appears at a relatively early date in a book list from Durham and in twelfth-century catalogues from the cathedral of St Andrew at Rochester and Bury St Edmunds.¹⁴ Within this period of

¹¹ Lapidge, 'Surviving Booklists from Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 46–47; and Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 41. Asser of St David's references Justin in his late-ninth-century *Vita Alfredi*; see Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 237. The Northumbrian fragment once belonged to the Weinheim collection and was edited by Brandt, 'Über ein Fragment einer Handschrift des Justinus'. See McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World*, p. 43 and Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, p. 197. Its influence on the Continental transmission of the *Philippic Histories* was first postulated by Bischoff, *Lorsch im Spiegel seiner Handschriften*, pp. 55–57 and is generally accepted. The other fragment is BL, MS Harley 5915, examined by Crick, 'An Anglo-Saxon Fragment of Justinus'. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, p. 318, adds Cambridge, Clare Coll., MS 18 as another copy of the *Philippic Histories* from the time.

¹² Thomson, 'Where Were the Latin Classics in England?', p. 26 suggests, however, that despite its circulation in Anglo-Saxon England, the *Philippic Histories* (among other classical texts) does not owe its continued transmission to pre-Conquest scribes.

¹³ See Olsen, *L'Etude des auteurs classiques latins*, 1, 537–51: the complete copies are Cambridge, CUL, MS Kk. 4. 5 and Cambridge, Trinity Coll., MS B. 1. 29; Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, MS Voss. Lat. F. 18; and Oxford, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 81. The origin of a fifth copy, Cambridge, CUL, MS Dd. 4. 11, remains in dispute. The fragment in the Beinecke Library at Yale University is identified by Rusche, 'A Twelfth-Century English Fragment of Justinus' "Epitome".

¹⁴ The Durham booklist is a record of those works owned by Bishop William of St Carileph (1081–1109); see Turner, 'The Earliest List of Durham MSS', p. 124. Sharpe and others, eds, *English Benedictine Libraries*, p. 481, records the Rochester copy. For the *Philippic Histories* at Bury St Edmunds, see Thomson, 'The Library of Bury St Edmunds', p. 633. A twelfth- or thirteenth-century copy of the *St Albans Compilation* (now Cambridge, Gonville and Caius Coll.,

increased circulation, it was due to the interest of two individuals, William of Malmesbury and Ralph Gubium, the abbot of St Albans, that this Roman history became a definitive source for investigations of the Macedonian empire.

The *Philippic Histories* served William as both a historical source text and a stylistic influence. In his Selden Collection, a compendium of Roman history (now Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Arch. Selden B 16), he relies on both Justin and Orosius for his record of ancient Macedon, and his admiration for the former is further evident in his own historiography.¹⁵ Syntactical echoes of the *Philippic Histories* have been identified in the prologue to his *Gesta regum Anglorum*, so William evidently knew the text quite well, and the value that he placed on it and other Roman texts available in Canterbury libraries allowed him to anticipate the pride of place that the *Philippic Histories* would gain later in the twelfth century.¹⁶ Indeed, with the advantage of such texts, William engaged in a character investigation that would ultimately span the ages of both the monastic and humanist transmissions of classical literature. His *Polyhistor deflorationum*, a florilegium of ancient stories and anecdotes, particularly reveals the influence of Roman philosophers on his record of Antiquity, and while this text lacks any prolonged discussion of Alexander and his empire, it attests to the availability of several moral anecdotes of his career. Some are traditional, in that the Church Fathers had interpolated them long before,¹⁷ and others represent variations of standard accounts of Alexander as a belligerent and proud tyrant.¹⁸

In still other anecdotes, however, William reveals his access to and interest in two of the conqueror's harshest Roman critics, Cicero and Seneca. From these philosophers of the Roman civil wars and the reign of Nero, respectively, William recovered a piecemeal record of Alexander's corruption, hubris, and unstable mind. From Cicero's *Philippics*, for example, he recounts how, in his worst moods, the 'uictor tot regum et populorum ire tristitieque succumbens' ('victor over so many kings and peoples succumbed to anger and sorrow'),¹⁹ a

MS 154/204), as discussed below, also belonged to the library; see James, 'Bury St. Edmunds Manuscripts', p. 257.

¹⁵ Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, p. 66.

¹⁶ Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, pp. 8–9, 67.

¹⁷ For example, the tale of the philosopher Diogenes, who asks Alexander to step out of his sunlight, and the pirate, who wittily compares himself with the conqueror. See William of Malmesbury, *Polyhistor*, ed. by Ouellette, pp. 83, 97.

¹⁸ William of Malmesbury, *Polyhistor*, ed. by Ouellette, p. 106.

¹⁹ William of Malmesbury, *Polyhistor*, ed. by Ouellette, pp. 110–11.

trait indicative, too, of Seneca's 'Vesanus Alexander' ('insane Alexander').²⁰ The importance of these interpolations is not so much in the transmission of Cicero and Seneca's texts (they offer, after all, only scattered remarks on Alexander) as in the transmission of novel philosophical attacks on the conqueror's character. The *Parva recapitulatio* of the previous century had condemned its subject without genuine insight into his psychological degradation, as Orosius brands Alexander a man of insatiable violence but does not concern himself with the reasons behind his transformation. With a wider array of sources, William bridges this original interest in 'true history' with those of the twelfth century, when for the first time, monastic writers reliant on the *Philippic Histories* gave considerable attention to Alexander's political mistakes and troubled state of mind.

The St Albans Compilation

Around 1150 the first full-length Anglo-Latin examination of these mistakes in Alexander's reign and the Macedonian empire appeared as the so-called *St Albans Compilation*, another codicological landmark of Alexander's reception in England and indeed in the entire Middle Ages.²¹ In basing the life and career of Alexander on the *Philippic Histories*, the *St Albans Compilation* established what would become a very long tradition of subscribing to the Roman treatment of Alexander as a man whose military and political brilliance could not overcome his most destructive vices and proclivities. In an age when Orosius offered one view of Alexander (Christian, wholly pejorative, and brief) and the romance tradition offered the other (admiring and at times incredible), Justin's text must have aroused a shocking consciousness of Alexander and his empire to readers of the twelfth century. On the one hand, Justin provided substance and a verbose record of the Macedonian past, but on the other he spoke soberly and rationally, at times critical and at other times respectful and even admiring of Alexander's success but always willing to express in paragraphs what Orosius did in but a few words.²²

Yet the primary disparity between Orosius's history and the *Philippic Histories* is that only the latter was written as a warning about the future of an empire led by men of absolute power, and so it explores at length Alexander's

²⁰ William of Malmesbury, *Polyhistor*, ed. by Ouellette, p. 140.

²¹ For a detailed discussion of the compendium, see Stone, 'Investigating Macedon in Medieval England'.

²² Although the two were often paired: see Mortensen, 'Orosius and Justinus in One Volume'.

ultimately destructive transformation into an Eastern potentate. In the *Philippic Histories*, the entire arch of the Macedonian's career, from Pella to India, encapsulates a dark and fatal irony: that as his army marched deeper into the East, so Alexander's appropriation of oriental customs increased, seen from the Roman perspective as luxurious, decadent, and tyrannical. For Justin, Alexander's political manoeuvring represents the second phase of his conquests, the fascinating and bloodless means by which he consolidated his authority over various foes turned subjects; however, Alexander's success led him to become far too Eastern and disconnected, a leader geographically and ideologically deracinated from his Macedonian upbringing. Here, Macedonian history was effectively written as a cautionary exemplum of the corruptive influence of success and unmitigated power.

This surely appealed to Ralph Gubiun, the abbot generally identified as the redactor of the *St Albans Compilation*, and the monks possessing 'one of the most important — if not, in fact, the largest — libraries within the Benedictine congregation'.²³ Gubiun would have certainly had the means, then, to produce a compendium of the *Philippic Histories* and the range of classical and medieval authors, including Orosius, Josephus Flavius, Jerome, Solinus, Augustine, Bede, and Isidore, listed in the work's incipit in both of the complete surviving manuscripts.²⁴ Indeed, what truly distinguishes the *Compilation* is its intellectual agenda, achieved by the skilful editing of these historical sources into a thematically pointed, five-book narrative, the work of both a well-read, thoughtful compiler and one with considerable information on Alexander and Macedon at his disposal. Gubiun's exclusion of legendary episodes is thus striking in itself (and the rarity of this decision cannot be understated when assessing the medieval Alexander), but so, too, is his exhaustive research into pagan, Christian, and Jewish accounts of Macedon.²⁵ To be sure, many of these individual texts

²³ Clark, *A Monastic Renaissance at St Albans*, p. 79. As R. M. Thomson has argued in Thomson, 'Where Were the Latin Classics in England?' and Thomson, 'England and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance', an impressive collection of Roman literature was copied and transmitted in post-Conquest England, particularly at the libraries of Bury St Edmunds and St Albans.

²⁴ Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219, fol. 1^r: 'Incipit hystoria regis Macedonum Philippi, filiiue eius Alexandri magni, excerpta de libris Pompeii Trogi, Orosii, Iosephi, Jeronimi, Solini, Augustini, Bede, et Ysidori'.

²⁵ Investigating the various literary traditions of Alexander was indeed uncommon among twelfth-century chroniclers and encyclopaedists. Besides Ekkehard of Aura and Vincent of Beauvais, Bishop Otto of Freising also recognizes (but does not correct) the story of Nectanabus

had long enjoyed a wide readership, but no contemporary Alexander compendium incorporates so many of them for so apparent a purpose. Under Gubiun's direction, centuries' worth of Christian and Jewish texts were used as supplementary notes for a sort of interpolated *Philippic Histories* and a compilation that marked the revival of the Roman Alexander in England but did not neglect the authors who had previously defined the medieval conception of the conqueror. As a full-length history of Macedon, Justin's narrative of corruption and decadence provided an opportunity for Gubiun to add traditional Christian and Jewish episodes from a variety of texts and contexts, yet at the same time, the scope of the *Philippic Histories* from the founding of Macedon to its collapse welcomed the interpolation of ancient and medieval sources of quite a different nature. A wealth of cultural and geographical background from Isidore's *Etymologies* and Solinus's *De mirabilibus mundi* supplements the list of peoples and lands conquered by Alexander, and occasional references to Bede provide chronological references to the lengthy episodes and help to transition from one major phase of the Macedonians' eastern campaign to the next.²⁶ The resulting text is a veritable storehouse of stories and anecdotes with one clear purpose, unique in its time: to showcase Alexander's corruption and descent into tyranny, his wretched death in Babylon, and the dismemberment of his empire by ambitious successors.

The *St Albans Compilation* survives complete in two unedited manuscripts, the twelfth-century Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219 and the late-twelfth or early-thirteenth-century Cambridge, Gonville and Caius Coll., MS 154/204, and a fifteenth-century fragment in Cambridge, CUL, MS Dd. 10. 24.²⁷ In the early thirteenth century, it was translated into Anglo-Norman (now Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 20), and the beginning of this translation was interpolated into the prologue of a family of the extremely

in Otto of Freising, *The Two Cities*, trans. by Mierow, p. 180: 'It is related of [Alexander] that he was the son, not of Philip, but of a certain Magian, Nectanabis, king of the Egyptians'.

²⁶ Gubiun consulted Isidore and Solinus for the descriptions of Asia and Africa in the fourth and fifth books. For the use of minor sources in the *Compilation*, see Stone, 'Investigating Macedon in Medieval England', pp. 83–85.

²⁷ For the Cambridge University Library copy, see Stone, 'Investigating Macedon in Medieval England', pp. 108–09. No provenance has been definitively assigned to Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219 (in which only the *St Albans Compilation*, fols 1^r–64^r, and Alexander's letters to Dindimus, fols 64^r–70^r, are written), but James, ed., *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts in Gonville and Caius College*, p. 77, and Ker, *The Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, p. 340 attribute Cambridge, Gonville and Caius Coll., MS 154/204 to Bury St Edmunds.

popular *Old French Prose Alexander*.²⁸ That the Anglo-Latin historical investigation found a second life in a vernacular is not surprising, given that the *Parva recapitulatio*, too, was rendered into Middle English in an age when several Latin legendary narratives appeared in the vernacular tongues of England.²⁹ However, no text rivalled the historical scope of the *St Albans Compilation*, a fact that surely accounted for its translation into Anglo-Norman and its preservation in the University Library manuscript some three centuries after the earliest surviving copy. It was long ago argued of the *Compilation*'s successful transmission that it was 'designed to entertain and instruct', and its story of a ruler corrupted by success and luxury certainly could have instructed its readership in a unique manner.³⁰ Moreover, the *Philippic Histories* maintained a certain novelty in the twelfth century, for although the text was impressively transmitted, no evidence suggests that it genuinely influenced Alexander's reception in England before William of Malmesbury's historiographical writing and Gubiun's *St Albans Compilation*. In reconstructing a history of Macedon from this particular source, Gubiun continued the work of the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor (promoting a Roman source text over romance and explicating the events of post-Alexandrian Macedon), but he did so in an extraordinarily modern fashion.

The *Parva recapitulatio* relies, as discussed in the previous chapter, on the Judeo-Christian 'hystoriographi' Orosius and Josephus, but in the *St Albans Compilation* these texts are superseded by a classical, pre-Christian narrative, the *Philippic Histories*. Moreover, Orosius's portrait of a ruler whom he denigrates as monstrous and tyrannical because of his paganism is unmistakably outdated in reading the *St Albans* narrative. The *Philippic Histories* provided Gubiun with an examination, not a mere condemnation, of the mistakes and vices of Macedonian rulers from Alexander's grandparents to his successors, and it did so with the Stoic perspective that success exacerbated the character

²⁸ For the Anglo-Norman translation, see Magoun, 'The *St Albans Compilation* and the *Old French Prose Alexander*'; and Arnold, 'The Prophecy of Daniel in the *Old French Prose Alexander*'; for a detailed study of the prologue to the French prose romance, see Ross, 'Some Notes on the Old French Alexander Romance'.

²⁹ The earliest Alexander romances in England were the Anglo-Norman *Roman de toute chevalerie* and the Middle English *Kyng Alisaunder* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but over the next two hundred years several vernacular romances appeared, including the alliterative *Wars of Alexander* and the Thornton *Prose Life of Alexander* and two Scottish works, *The Buik of Alexander* and *The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*.

³⁰ Arnold, 'The Prophecy of Daniel in the *Old French Prose Alexander*', p. 325.

of inherently corrupt individuals. The *St Albans Compilation* thus epitomizes the twelfth-century Renaissance and the 'renewed study' of Roman literature, particularly among the Benedictines, and represents an evolution of BL, MS Royal, 13. A. I and its own production in the late eleventh century.³¹ The *Parva recapitulatio* therein is an invaluable record of rejecting romance and its heroic Alexander, yet it was produced in an intellectual climate that had not yet reaped the benefits of widespread classical transmission. The *St Albans Compilation* presents, on the other hand, a story worthy of the Elizabethan stage and initiates a new interest in the Stoic portrayal of Alexander's collapse into madness and degradation. Like its eleventh-century predecessor, the *St Albans* narrative contextualizes this collapse within the entire history of Macedon.

The first book of the *St Albans Compilation* portrays, that is, the Macedonian exemplar for political and familial intrigue, which begins with Alexander's father Philip and his treacherous family. Alexander's paternal grandmother Eurydice initiates, for example, a long series of coups and assassinations. Upon her husband's death, she has her elder sons, Alexander and Perdiccas, killed, and Philip comes to the throne amidst considerable public hope for an end to such distressing violence. This first book of the *Compilation* explores, however, Philip's own degradation as he sets about expanding the Macedonian Empire. Drunk with power and a scourge for his allies, he effectively undermines the earlier public confidence in his rule. While romances had presented Alexander as the unsettling son of sorcery and adultery, the *Compilation* instead provides him with a lineage of criminality, intrigue, and corruption. Well before Alexander's own disreputable behaviour in the East, a lengthy history of the Macedonian royal family presents his grandmother who killed her own sons, his father who quickly yielded to tyranny, and his mother, Olympias, who became a source of fear and intrigue in her own right.³² To complete the cycle, all that is needed is Alexander's increasingly paranoid and vicious behaviour and the ultimate treachery of his successors.

As Alexander succeeds his murdered father near the end of the first book, Gubiun acknowledges this cycle by comparing the violence and degradation of both men's kingship:

³¹ Thomson, 'England and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance', pp. 11–12.

³² To be sure, Olympias's menacing character in the medieval imagination resulted from Alexander romances as well. See above Chapter 2, pp. 46–51 for her duplicitous character in the Valerius *Epitome*.

Huic Alexander filius successit et uirtute et uiciis patre maior [...]. Iram pater dissimulare, plerumque etiam uincere hic ubi exarsisset, nec dilatio ultionis nec modus erat. Uini nimis uterque audius sed ebrietas uicia diuersa. Patri mos erat etiam de conuiuio in hostem procurrare periculis se temere offerre. Alexander non in hostem sed in suos seuiebat. Quamobrem sepe Philippum uulneratum prelia remisere, hic uero amicorum interfector conuiuio frequenter excessit [...]. Amari pater malle hic metui [...]. Frugalitati pater luxurie filius magis deditus erat. Quibus artibus orbis imperii fundamenta pater fecit; operis tanti gloriam filius consummauit.

Philip was succeeded by his son Alexander, who was greater than his father in both his virtue and his vices [...]. The father hid his anger and quite often overcame it; when the son was incensed, there was no delay to or limit on his vengeance. Each was fond of wine, but their drunken vices were different: the father was accustomed to running straight from the feast to the enemy, dealing with him directly, and rashly putting himself in danger; Alexander raged not against his enemy, but rather his own men. Philip, therefore, often returned home wounded from battle, but Alexander frequently left a feast after having murdered his friends [...]. The father preferred to be loved; the son to be feared [...]. The father was given more to frugality; the son to luxury. By his skill the father laid the foundation for global conquest, while the son attained the glory of the extraordinary achievement.³³

Although Alexander similarly begins his reign as a ‘medela’ (‘remedy’) for his family’s past violence, he cannot escape his figurative inheritance, which Gubiun emphasizes to set an unsettling tone for the rest of the *St Albans Compilation*.³⁴ Alexander’s achievement of his desired ‘global conquest’ comes, then, with a steep price, for he will fall prey to the same vices that afflicted his father. Unlike Philip, Alexander will find that the catalyst for such vices lies in Persia, and this cautionary Roman portrayal of Alexander interpolated from the *Philippic Histories* depends on his oriental empire and his extraordinary transformation, wherein he would become, to the increasing dismay of his men, more Persian than Macedonian. Alexander may be inclined to violent and temperamental behaviour, but Persia offers him an opportunity both to follow the worst of his desires and to recreate himself. In the second book of the *Compilation*, Alexander relishes playing the role of the Great King of Persia both in his adoption of Eastern manners and in his ultimate replacement of Darius III, and with each victory on his Eastern front, he irreparably isolates

³³ Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219, fol. 9^r.

³⁴ Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219, fol. 11^v: ‘Quis rebus veluti medela quaedam interuentus Alexandri fuit.’

himself from his homesick Macedonian soldiers. After his first major victory over the Persians at the Battle of Issus, for example, he becomes a *pater familias* for Darius's mother, wife, and daughters even as he surveys the spoils of war:

Post hec opes Darii diuitiarumque apparatus contemplatus admiratione tantarum rerum capitur. Tunc primum luxuriosa conuiuia et magnificentiam plurimum secari, tunc et Barsinen captiuam propter forme pulchritudinem diligere cepit, a qua postea susceptum puerum Herculem uocauit.

As he afterward gazed at Darius's wealth and the splendour of his riches, Alexander was first seized with an admiration for such things. It was then that he began to frequent luxuriant and sumptuous feasts, and it was then that he began to fall in love with the captive Barsine, on account of her beautiful visage, and with her he later had a son named Hercules.³⁵

Alexander thus replaces Darius as both a familial and political leader in adopting his family, stealing his gold, following his practice of luxuriant banqueting, and fathering a half-Persian child.

At the same time, his Persian campaign is undermined by short-sighted and egocentric decisions. While his soldiers wish for the spoils of war and a triumphant return home, Alexander pursues new paths of glory and oriental kingship. In Egypt, he bribes priests to declare him the son of a god (and thereby demands that even his countrymen recognize him as such), and he maintains his policy of cultural unification with foreign subjects, despite the animosity of his soldiers. He orders his men to dress like Persians, to take Persian brides and to have biracial sons who would one day fill the Macedonian army, and to welcome his new public persona. As Alexander assumes a harem and spends his time at decadent feasting and in the throes of sexual excess, he pushes his men to the point of open rebellion. To counter the threat, he simply kills or orders killed anyone who challenges his authority, including (most infamously) Clitus, the veteran general who served under Philip as well, and Callisthenes, Alexander's court historian. As such violence surges, Alexander secures the good will of the Persians more than his fellow Macedonians and further befuddles his mental clarity in Babylon, his new capital, where he spends his last days in complete debauchery, until one night, 'Accepto poculo media potione repente velut telo confixus ingemuit' ('when he had accepted his goblet and was taking a drink, he suddenly groaned, as if he had been transfixed by a spear').³⁶

³⁵ Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219, fol. 16^r.

³⁶ Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219, fol. 36^v.

For the moment, Alexander witnesses a perhaps unexpected outpouring of grief from his countrymen, but the sentiment is fleeting and illusory. Having established an extraordinary empire with a good deal of controversy, Alexander sees the tragedy that awaits it from his deathbed:

Dimissis militibus circumstantes amicos percontantur uideanturne similem sibi repperturi regem. Tacentibus cunctis tum ipse hoc nesciat ita illud scire uaticinariusque se ac pene oculis uidere dixit quantum sit in hoc certamine sanguinis fusura Macedonia, quantis cedibus quo cruore mortuo sibi parentatura [...]. Cum deficere eum amici uiderent querunt quem imperii faciat heredem. Respondit dignissimum [...]. Hac uoce ueluti bellicum inter amicos cecinisset aut malum discordie misisset ita omnes in emulationem consurgunt et ambitionem uulgi tanti cum fauore militum querunt.

When the soldiers were dismissed, Alexander asked his friends standing around him whether or not they supposed that they would find another king like him. They fell silent, and he told them that he did not know that, but he did know and could prophesy — and could almost see it with his eyes — how much blood Macedon would spill in the oncoming struggle, and with what slaughter and gory death it would avenge his murder [...]. When his friends saw that he was dying, they asked him whom he would make his heir to the empire, and he responded ‘the most worthy’ [...]. It was as if by these words he had given his friends the call to attack or had tossed among them the apple of discord, for they all rose up in rivalry and sought popularity among the great masses and the favour of the soldiers.³⁷

Immediately following this passage, Gubiun interpolates the quintessential Roman anxiety over Alexander as a conqueror not only seduced by his military success but also willing to undergo a cultural (specifically oriental) metamorphosis that dramatically alters his countrymen’s reaction to his death:

Sed nec deuicte gentes fidem nuncio habuerunt quod ut inuictum regem ita immortalem esse crediderant, recordantes quotiens presenti morte ereptus esset, quam sepe pro amisso repente se non sospitem tantum suis, uerum etiam uictorem obtulisset. Ut uero mortis eius fides affuit omnes barbare gentes paulo ante ab eo deuicte non ut hostem sed ut parentem luxerunt [...]. Contra Macedones [...] non ut civem ac tante maiestatis regem uerum ut hostem amissum gaudebant et seueritatem nimiam et adsidia belli pericula execrantes.

But the conquered [Persians] placed no faith in this report, because they believed that the unconquered king was immortal, and they recalled how many times Alexander had been snatched from certain death and how often, when he had been

³⁷ Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219, fol. 37^r–37^v.

presumed dead, he had presented himself to his men not only safe but even victorious. Indeed, when they accepted that Alexander was dead, all of the foreign peoples who had been defeated by him just a little while earlier mourned for him as though he were their father rather than their enemy [...]. The Macedonians, conversely, rejoiced as if they had lost not a fellow citizen and king of such great majesty, but an enemy, and they cursed his harsh severity and the constant dangers of his wars.³⁸

In the wake of this schism, Alexander's unified empire devolves into ambitious factions, and Gubiun devotes his final two books to the backgrounds of and battles in the individual provinces across Europe, Africa, and Asia. Here, bloody partisan violence overtakes the state, and 'Sic Macedonia in duas partes discurrentibus ducibus in sua viscera armatur' ('Macedon, with its leaders dividing into two parties, took up arms against its own vitals').³⁹ Alexander's bloodline, along with the empire that he built in such spectacular fashion, is effectively exterminated, and the last men to have fought under the conqueror determine the fate of the Macedonian *imperium*: Demetrius in Macedon, Lysimachus in Europe, Seleucus in Asia, and Ptolemy II in Egypt. After the first is attacked and defeated by the other three, Lysimachus and Seleucus engage in a final battle representative of Macedonian treachery and fatal ambition:

Ultimum hoc certamen commilitonum Alexandri fuit et uelut ad exemplum fortune par reservatum. Lisimachus annos natus quatuor et septuaginta erat, Seleucus sex et septuaginta. Sed in hac etate utrique animi iuueniles erant imperii que cupiditatem insatiabilem gerebant. Quippe cum orbem terrarum extinctis iam triginta et quatuor Alexandri ducibus duo soli possiderent, angustiis sibimet inclusi uidebantur uiteque finem non annorum spacio sed imperii terminis metiebantur.

This was the last battle among the fellow soldiers of Alexander and one reserved, as it were, as an appropriate example of Fortune. Lysimachus was seventy-four and Seleucus seventy-six. Even at that age each man was youthful in spirit and led by an insatiable desire for power: although they two alone — with all of Alexander's thirty-four successors dead — possessed the world, they seemed too close for comfort in its narrow confines and assessed the end of their lives not by the number of years but by the extent of their empires.⁴⁰

³⁸ Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219, fols 37^v–38^r.

³⁹ Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219, fol. 56^v.

⁴⁰ Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219, fol. 63^v. The detail of the thirty-four successors is found in Orosius.

Although Seleucus wins for the moment, seven months later he, too, is assassinated and proven to be 'fragilitate humana se ipsum exemplum futurum' ('an example of the fragility of man').⁴¹ Thus ends the Macedonian empire at the hands of Seleucus's murderer, Ptolemy II (whose father had also served as one of Alexander's famed generals), who went on to establish one of the classical world's famed dynasties, that of the Ptolemies, which would survive until Octavian's victory at Actium. The *Parva recapitulatio* had established the framework of this history by identifying the primary characters and outlining the basic events of the civil wars, yet the *St Albans Compilation* offers a thorough portrayal of the empire's rise and fall. From Alexander's casting of the 'apple of discord' among his survivors to their violent animosity, the *Philippic Histories* provides the *Compilation* with a prolonged examination of human greed and corruption. As a result, the fate of Macedon after Alexander's death is not assessed simply by the murder of his family or even the fate of those who plotted against him but by the unravelling of the entire Macedonian Empire due to ambition and treachery.

Writing the Romance of Alexander in Twelfth-Century England: The Roman de toute chevalerie

The reasons behind this interest in the Roman view of Alexander and his empire certainly belong to the success at English monasteries 'of a highly developed literary culture, humane in spirit and seeking its models in the Roman past' since the late eleventh century, yet the anxieties in the history of Macedon were not relegated to interpolations and Latin compendia.⁴² These anxieties also informed the earliest Alexander romance in England, the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, a narrative that identifies just how relevant ancient Macedon had become to twelfth-century England and that sheds light on the popularity of the *Philippic Histories* at the time. Moreover, the *Roman* leads back to the investigation conducted at St Albans, and its two Anglo-Norman manuscripts pro-

⁴¹ Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219, fols 63^v–64^r: 'Letus tanta victoria Seleuchus et quod maius victoria putat solum se de cohorte Alexandri remansisse victoremque victorum exitisse non humanum esse opus sed divinum munus gloriatur ignarus prorsus non multo tempore fragilitate humana se ipsum exemplum futurum' ('Seleuchus was happy with so great a victory and considered it a greater victory still that he alone remained of Alexander's officers. Ignorant that in a short time he would become an example of human fragility, he boasted that his surviving as a victor of victors was due not to the work of man but to a gift from the gods').

⁴² Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, 1, 291.

vide considerable insight into its origin and early reception as a well-researched, monastically-produced text.⁴³ The first and older of these, Cambridge, Trinity Coll., MS O. 9. 34 (c. 1250), was long associated with the scribes and artists of St Albans, and although recent scholarship has attributed this copy of the *Roman* to a secular workshop, other connections to the Benedictine transmission of Alexander texts remain intriguing.⁴⁴ The author, one Thomas of Kent, appears, for example, in portraits in the manuscripts of the *Roman* in the garb of a Benedictine monk producing his book, an act that Keith Busby describes as 'the intellectual-verbal process of translation from Latin into the vernacular',⁴⁵ and although Thomas translated the Valerius *Epitome* as his primary source for the *Roman*, he supplemented this romance with the sorts of histories that informed the *St Albans Compilation* as well, including the *Philippic Histories* and Orosius's *Historiae adversum paganos*.⁴⁶

Like Ralph Gubium, Thomas uses these histories to provide a fuller account of the civil wars after Alexander's death. In his telling, the dismemberment of the conqueror's empire arose from widespread conspiracy and merited widespread condemnation, and he offers his own conclusion to Macedonian history based upon animosity and civil war:

Après l'ensevelir ly duc se desevrent, | En lur propres terres e en lur citez alerent
| E les chevalers par les regnés manderent. | Icil qui po[ei]ent e puis s'en assem-
blerent, | Efforcèrent lur murs e lur citez fremerent, | E garnirent lur turs; de guerre
s'atornerent. | Communement par tuit le mond se mellerent; | Ly povere e ly chetif
cest estrif compar[er]ent, | E la mort Alisandre mult cher achaterent; | E icil des
regnés qui plus la desirerent, | Primes se repentirent pur le mal qu'il troverent: | En

⁴³ The *Roman* also survives in a complete copy adapted for Continental readership (the early-fourteenth-century BnF, MS 24364) and in two fragments (Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Lat. Misc. b. 17 of the mid thirteenth century and BL, MS Add. 46701 of the thirteenth century).

⁴⁴ The association of the Cambridge manuscript with St Albans began with James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College*, III (1904), 482, and he even assigned its 152 drawings to Matthew Paris. For the argument against St Albans, see Ross, 'A Thirteenth Century Anglo-Norman Workshop Illustrating Secular Romances?'; Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, I, 129; and Avril and Stirnemann, *Manuscrits enluminés*, p. 137.

⁴⁵ This picture of Thomas and his connection to St Albans is discussed at length in Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, pp. 36–38, and Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background*, pp. 105–07. Busby, 'Codices manuscriptos nudos tenemus', p. 267.

⁴⁶ He also consulted three other sources of the *St Albans Compilation* besides Justin and Orosius: Petrus Alfonsi's *Disciplina clericalis*, Solinus's *De mirabilibus mundi*, and Aethicus Ister's *Cosmographica*. For a detailed examination of the sources of the *Roman*, see Weynand, *Der Roman de toute Chevalerie des Thomas von Kent*.

servage chairent en peur qe nen erent. Grant merveille est de gent k'encontre reson tirent. | Changent en corages e en lur quer desirent | Noveautez e changes dont sey memes enpirent. | Tant cum Alisandre vesqui, li baron l'enhaient, | Destraistent par paroles e plousors mals bastirent, | E felonessment par poison le trairent | Cum sist a son manger; granz mals as regnés firent. | Cil qui a conseil furent unques n'en joirent; | En tel aventure e en tel peine chairent | Dont il e tuit lur heir puis en repentirent. | Plus de quinze realmes tel doel en suffirent; | Exillé en furent; la sue mort mal virent. | La gent en fu destruite e des terres fuirent. | Povere e cheitif lur herité guerpirent | Pur la mort Alisandre qu'il a tort mordirent.

After burying Alexander, the leaders separated and went to their respective lands and cities, and summoned their knights throughout the kingdoms. Those who were the most powerful and who then gathered together fortified their walls and secured their cities, protected their towers and turned their minds to war. They fought each other throughout the entire world; the poor and the enfeebled paid for this strife, and they paid dearly for the death of Alexander. And those in the kingdoms who most desired it [the death of Alexander] repented for the first time because of the evil they encountered: they fell into servitude worse than that in which they had been. What a wonder that these people acted against reason! They changed their intentions, and in their hearts they desired the novelties and changes that they initiated themselves. While Alexander was living, his barons hated him and slandered him and formed plots against him, before they traitorously poisoned him at the dinner table. This was a great misfortune for his empire. The culprits gained no advantage from this act, for they and their descendants alike were subjected to great pain and punishment. More than fifteen kingdoms suffered tremendous grief and exile because of this murder: they paid dearly for his death. By the death of Alexander, so unjustly killed, his people were killed and took to flight, and the poor and the enfeebled lost their inheritance.⁴⁷

The emphasis here lies on the public suffering that followed upon Alexander's death, as the successors bring destruction not only upon themselves, but upon the innocent populace ('the poor and the enfeebled') of Alexander's empire as well. In this striking passage all of Alexander's successors, not just the conspirators, are inculpated both for their leader's murder and for the public suffering that will ensue in their civil wars. In this panoramic view of the Macedonian empire, the conqueror shares his tragedy: no longer is he alone as the lamentable fallen ruler, but now his empire and the peoples therein join him in death. Thomas clearly owes a debt here to the same historical sources that inspired the *Parva recapitulatio* and the *St Albans Compilation*, but he did not arrive at such

⁴⁷ Thomas of Kent, *The Anglo-Norman Alexander*, ed. by Foster, I, 8028–54.

an ending by chance. Although he relied on a romance source (the Valerius *Epitome*), he belonged to the monastic tradition of investigating the classical Alexander, the chief results of which informed these two Anglo-Latin works.

The influence of these narratives in exploring the political division of Macedon is likewise evident in the sweeping interpolations in Cambridge, Trinity Coll., MS O. 9. 34, the oldest surviving copy of the *Roman*, which is supplemented with a lengthy exchange between the dying Alexander and his successors. Here, the scribe and artist appended a long textual and visual account of the fragmentation of Macedon to Thomas's passage above, with its aspersions cast on the conqueror's successors and the public suffering across his empire. Of the eighteen drawings in this addendum, twelve feature Alexander crowning each of his twelve successors, and both before and after these coronations, these men are characterized by their growing unease, so that by the end of the manuscript the faces of those lamenting the dying king are mingled with the faces of those conniving to secure a larger share of his empire. The scribe interpolated these details of Alexander's division of his empire from the French *Roman d'Alexandre*, in which there is no basis for animosity, and the narrative simply concludes with Alexander's portioning of his lands among twelve successors, their public, unanimous mourning for the poisoned conqueror, and their appointment of Ptolemy as their suzerain and the ruler of Egypt.⁴⁸ Out of respect to his king, Ptolemy goes on to bury his corpse lavishly in Alexandria, where he commissions a spectacular pyramid and a statue of the king. There are no blood and guts in this ending — Alexander dies, Ptolemy gains sovereignty over his fellow successors, and all lament their king in unison. Such an image of unity clearly failed to attract the producers of the Trinity College manuscript, which complements Thomas's concluding passage on the civil wars above.

There may have been, however, a historical reason for the French narrative's harmonious conclusion to its story of Alexander and a contemporary inspiration for Thomas's peculiar account of Macedonian dismemberment and the baronial treachery that casts a pall on the final scenes of the *Roman de toute chevalerie*. The *Roman d'Alexandre* and other Continental texts had already rejected as fiction the story that Nectanabus fathered Alexander and thus restored Philip to his rightful place in the line of Macedonian kings, yet they did not show an interest in the civil wars after Alexander's death, much less in the disreputable behaviour of the conqueror, his father, and his successors.

⁴⁸ *The Medieval French Roman d'Alexandre*, ed. by Armstrong and others, II (1938), laisse 30.

These Continental works lacked, then, the primary interests of twelfth-century Insular writers to assert a new Macedonian history based on internecine bloodshed and political collapse, but the elevated stature of the Macedonian Empire in French and German narratives of the later Middle Ages has its own pointed tradition. Before the widespread popularity of tracing European lineages to the Trojans, both the Franks and Saxons isolated theirs in ancient Macedon. In the ninth century, Otfrid, a monk of Weissenburg and the author of the *Evangelienbuch*, claimed that the Franks were ‘the equals of Alexander in conquest [...] and the descendants of the Macedonians’, a legend that had originated some three hundred years earlier.⁴⁹ This story was, not surprisingly, malleable, and as explained by the historian Widukind when the Saxons sought to promote their own Macedonian ancestry in the following century, two groups of exiles fled Troy upon its destruction: Aeneas famously went to Italy, but a second group, the ancestors of the Franks, travelled towards the Danube. From there, the Danube exiles split into two subgroups, as one stayed in the region and eventually became the Franks, while the other travelled to Macedon and were the ancestors of Philip and Alexander, from whom the Saxons later arose.⁵⁰ Within a quarter of a century after Widukind, the Normans returned to the legend but focused on its Trojan aspects, and even though the idea of Macedonian lineage did not survive into the age of William’s conquest of England, Alexander represented both an ancient culture as politically valuable as that of the Trojans and, as he did throughout the classical and medieval world, a preeminent exemplar of building an empire.⁵¹ Like the Trojans, the Macedonians were remembered not for their destruction but for the bloodlines and model of success that they provided modern European powers.

Across the Channel, however, Alexander remained vulnerable to criticism, as the textual record of his legacy disseminated in English monasteries. Over the course of the twelfth century, this record transformed Insular conceptions of ancient Macedon as an integral empire in pre-Hellenistic (or, more accurately

⁴⁹ Hummer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval Europe*, p. 148. In twelfth-century Germany, Lamprecht, the poet of the *Alexanderlied*, relied on 1 Maccabees for the historical framework of Alexander’s career (and the fact that Philip, not Nectanabus, was his father); Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance*, p. 166 argues that one reason for this ‘renewed stress on [the] historical features’ of Alexander’s legacy was the tradition of the Franks’ Macedonian lineage.

⁵⁰ Southern, *History and Historians*, pp. 23–26.

⁵¹ See Chibnall, *The Normans*, pp. 18–19 for a synopsis of the legend as used by the Norman historian Dudo.

from their perspective, pre-Roman) Antiquity, one worthy of examination not for any notions of ancestry but for its relevance to the modern political climate.⁵² William of Malmesbury and Ralph Gubiun attest, as discussed above, to the new literature available on Macedon by the midway point of the century, as well as to its critical nature. Based on Roman Stoic condemnations of the late Republic and early Empire, Alexander appears in the *Philippic Histories* as an erratic conqueror unable to resist Persian luxury more than a heroic Macedonian leader. This new, humanistic conception of Alexander as a man whose profundity of emotions now equalled the profundity of his military talent, was not the sole product of his twelfth-century re-evaluation. The *Roman de toute chevalerie* demonstrates, too, the influence of new sources on ancient Macedon, yet it also suggests that this Roman Alexander still had to contend — and could still be replaced by — the *Roman d'Alexandre* and its romance lineage. In asserting his own vernacular version of the Alexander legend, Thomas of Kent, the purported author of the Anglo-Norman poem, did not appropriate the Stoic portrait of a conqueror driven to madness by his success, which the Benedictines had made readily available. He did appropriate, however, the portion of Macedonian history that fills the last two books of the *St Albans Compilation* and which the French *Roman d'Alexandre* had effectively white-washed, and Thomas's handling of this period of civil war, as seen in his passage on baronial treachery translated above, leaves no doubt as to his judgment of culpability. While the Continental romance imposes peace on Alexander's survivors — the very men regarded as Frankish ancestors and worthy, along with their own supposed Trojan forbearers, of admiration — Thomas creates an altogether bleaker picture of Macedon's collapse. His interests may have been in the tyrannical Alexander promulgated at St Albans, but his treatment of the conqueror's empire reflects no less than this earlier compendium the twelfth-century monastic desire to incorporate 'instruction about the past as a means to edification in the present' into narratives about Antiquity.⁵³ Thomas, like his St Albans predecessors, engaged in a re-appropriation of Alexander and his empire for his own agenda, one distinguished from Continental romances but equally based on an awareness of Macedon's pertinence for his age.⁵⁴

⁵² The only narrative establishing a link between Britain and Alexander is the fourteenth-century French romance *Perceforest*, which explains that after Alexander conquered Britain, he named this eponymous hero its king.

⁵³ Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain*, pp. 196–97.

⁵⁴ In this context, Insular investigations into ancient Macedon as an empire not of national

Alexander and Post-Conquest Kingship

While the oldest manuscript of the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, the Trinity College copy, dates to c. 1250, Thomas's outburst against Alexander's survivors belongs to the previous century, amidst a veritable tradition of discord between England's rulers and upper classes. Within this tradition, a wealth of intriguing contexts and parallels suggest that the innovative treatment of Alexander, his successors, and his empire in Thomas's *Roman*, the *St Albans Compilation*, and even its intellectual predecessor, the *Parva recapitulatio*, responded as much to the troubling times in which they were produced as to the monastic transmission of texts that inspired their narratives. Brian Foster dates the *Roman de toute chevalerie* to the 1170s or 1180s, but the vividness and passion with which Thomas describes the Macedonian civil wars after Alexander's death echoes accounts of what had befallen the English in earlier generations.⁵⁵ The succession crisis after the death of Henry I, the strife within his family, and the bloodshed under King Stephen naturally inspired literary reactions, all of which agree on the lamentable transformation of a prosperous land into the chaos of civil war. For anyone familiar with the Alexander narratives circulating in twelfth-century England, this nineteen-year period known as the Anarchy had placed the nation in a dire position all too reminiscent of ancient Macedon.

The *Gesta Stephani* responds, for example, to England's political transformation amidst the collapse of law and order in a manner strikingly similar to Thomas's epilogue on Macedon:

When King Henry, the peace of his country and father of his people, came to his last moments and paid his debt to death, the grievous calamity made the entire aspect of the kingdom troubled and utterly disordered. For where, during his reign, had been the fount of righteous judgement and the abode of law, there, on his decease, grew up abundance of iniquity and a seed-plot of all manner of wickedness; insomuch as England, formerly the seat of justice, the habitation of peace, the height of piety, the mirror of religion, became thereafter a home of perversity, a haunt of strife, a training-ground of disorder, and a teacher of every kind of rebellion. The sacred obligations of hallowed friendship were at once broken among the people; the closest bonds of relationship were loosened; and those who had been clothed in the cloak of an enduring peace were assailed by the noise of war

ancestry but of political warning accords with what Matthew, 'Durham and the Anglo-Norman World', p. 15, identifies as 'a national desire to rescue the English traditions and past from French disrespect or indifference' in twelfth-century historiography.

⁵⁵ Thomas of Kent, *The Anglo-Norman Alexander*, ed. by Foster, II, 76.

and the fury of Mars. For each man, seized by a strange passion for violence, raged cruelly against his neighbour and reckoned himself the more glorious the more guiltily he attacked the innocent. Likewise, utterly disregarding, or rather bringing to naught, the enactments of law, whereby an undisciplined people is restrained, and abandoned to all things unlawful, they were executing most readily any crime that occurred to their minds.⁵⁶

Each of the concerns in Thomas's vociferous reaction to Alexander's death informs this passage on England's own misfortune, as immediately following the demise of an exemplary king, the desire for power drives his survivors to civil war, and the public that once enjoyed an idealized social structure now suffers the crimes instigated by ambition and greed. William of Malmesbury, no stranger to the classical world's import to his own time, further recounts in his *Historia Novella* that 1140 saw particular suffering within religious communities, as the agents of anarchy plundered churches and graveyards and tortured and held for ransom landowners to such an extent 'that even bishops or monks could not safely pass from village to village'.⁵⁷ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* also emphasizes the public fear, pillaging, and starvation that gripped England during the civil war under Stephen's reign.⁵⁸ These accounts thus convey a totality of disorder that affected religious, political, and public spheres and that Thomas of Kent saw in Macedon as well, when Alexander's 'people were killed and took to flight, and the poor and enfeebled lost their inheritance'. Such disorder did not, in his mind, afflict only the first generation of culprits and victims. Rather, he explains that when Alexander's barons committed similar atrocities across Macedon, they subjected their descendants to 'great pain and punishment' and robbed the public of peace and prosperity. Writing near the end of the twelfth century, Thomas was in a unique position to assess a period in which 'there was virtually no decade [...] which did not witness armed struggle between members of the ruling dynasty'.⁵⁹ Since the death of William I, England suffered

⁵⁶ *Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. by Potter, p. 3.

⁵⁷ William of Malmesbury, *Historia novella*, ed. by King, p. 73.

⁵⁸ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Whitelock, p. 199 (the entry for 1137): 'I have neither the ability nor the power to tell all the horrors nor all the torments [Stephen's enemies] inflicted upon wretched people in this country [...]. When the wretched people had no more to give, they robbed and burned the villages, so that you could easily go a whole day's journey and never find anyone occupying a village, nor land tilled. Then corn was dear, and meat and butter and cheese, because there was none in the country. Wretched people died of starvation; some lived by begging for alms, who had once been rich men; some fled the country'.

⁵⁹ Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 5–6.

multiple succession crises, none more persistent than those during the last quarter of Thomas's century,⁶⁰ and he certainly would have had reason to remain pessimistic in confronting a parallel situation in one of Antiquity's famed and seemingly most successful empires. That the fighting among Alexander's successors aroused Thomas's interest is undeniable, given that he did not borrow his emotional passage on these individuals from any of his sources on Macedon. Rather, it is the passage of an author who sees in Macedonian history a mirror for his own times. Thomas, however, was not alone in responding to this aspect of Alexander's legacy, for it had informed Insular treatments of Macedon for a hundred years before his *Roman*.

In fact, the earliest surviving in-depth examination in England of the Macedonian civil wars, that in the *Parva recapitulatio*, is contemporaneous with the Rebellion of 1088, instigated by the sons of William I and their followers after the conqueror's death. This Anglo-Latin addendum discusses at length the partisan violence among the successors who followed Alexander in building a global power but transformed into 'ravenous cubs' who 'crushed themselves, incited to violence against each other by their greed for booty, and consumed themselves in civil wars'.⁶¹ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* similarly presents such anarchy after William's death, when the French supporters of Robert 'marched and ravaged and burned and laid waste the king's demesnes, and they ruined the lands of all those men who were in allegiance to the king'.⁶² Two generations later, during the chaos of the Nineteen-Year Anarchy, Ralph Gubiun arranged the *St Albans Compilation* and its two books devoted to the Macedonian civil wars and interpolated the same passage on Alexander's 'cubs' (originally from Orosius) translated above from the *Parva recapitulatio*.⁶³ The most condemnatory responses to the Anarchy come from monastic voices, but so, too, does the highest criticism of Alexander and his empire. In interpolating the *Philippic Histories* and Orosius's *Historiae adversum paganos* (the source for the passage above), Gubiun offers a double-edged critique of Macedon: with the one, he incorporates in novel fashion the sorts of moral and philosophical concerns over Alexander's temperament and the nature of absolute power that had occupied Cicero and Seneca, and with the other he repeats in traditional patristic fashion the portrait of Alexander and his successors as bloodthirsty pagan

⁶⁰ Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 6–7.

⁶¹ See above, Chapter 2, pp. 69–70, n. 41.

⁶² *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Whitelock, p. 166.

⁶³ Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219, fol. 55^r.

tyrants. In both sources, he would have found responses to Macedonian history that were applicable to the fate of his country in the mid twelfth century.

Before the *Parva recapitulatio* in the late eleventh century and the *St Albans Compilation* in 1151, no Alexander text in England focuses so intently on the political discord following his death, and certainly none presents the conqueror as a tyrant of devastatingly unstable character. First and foremost, these texts must be considered as landmarks of historical investigation and of interpolating ancient narratives of Macedon to form a new, authoritative record to combat romances. However, whether or not the redactors of these texts found inspiration in current events is a justified question. The *Parva recapitulatio*'s reintroduction of the Macedonian civil wars to Alexander narratives, the *St Albans Compilation*'s lengthy account of them, and Thomas of Kent's anger over baronial treachery in a period of English history plagued by such political disasters cannot be coincidental. That Alexander and his empire held a unique significance in late eleventh- and twelfth-century England is apparent, then, and as a result, the fact that both the *Parva recapitulatio* and the *St Albans Compilation* cast doubt on the character of the conqueror and on the value of conquest itself demands a similar historical contextualization of Alexander's legacy and political relevance.

Before relating the murders of Alexander's mother, widow, and son in the wars instigated by his successors, the *Parva recapitulatio* assesses, for example, the conqueror's own assassination as due punishment, for the world trembles in fear of him, and 'with his vehemence hardly curbed, he was still thirsting for blood', and when Alexander arrives at Babylon, 'among those closest to him he was killed by a poisoned drink in the thirty-second year of his life'. As suggested at the end of the previous chapter, the late-eleventh-century date of BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 and its oldest copy of this Anglo-Latin text poses an unavoidable but fruitful question of contemporary contexts. Written around the time of William's death in 1087 and the violence of the following year, there is simply no manuscript like it from Anglo-Saxon or early post-Conquest England. Beginning with a portrait of Alexander modelled on Continental images of kingship that had influenced rulers in England, most recently the image established by William as the paradigm for his Great Seal, and ending with a condemnation of Alexander's belligerence and his survivors' civil war, the manuscript truly reads as a product of the political upheaval of its age more than monastic curiosity in Macedonian history. Even in the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor's presentation of Alexander, part of his objective in recording 'true history' is to present his subject as a tyrant, not a hero, and as a man who ruled by war to such an extent as to denigrate his legacy. This presentation, too, has a

lasting historical relevance, especially when collated with the mid-twelfth-century treatment of Macedon at St Albans and the account of William I's death by Orderic Vitalis.

Orderic wrote his *Historia Ecclesiastica* nine years before Ralph Gubiu compiled his history of Macedon at St Albans, and in several instances the description of the Norman conqueror sounds remarkably similar to those of his Macedonian counterpart. He imbues William's last moments with a pervasive sense of foreboding and regret, beginning with the king's fear that when his Normans lack strong leadership, 'they tear each other to pieces and destroy themselves, for they hanker after rebellion, cherish sedition, and are ready for any treachery', and 'if they are allowed to go wherever they choose, as an untamed ass does, both they and their ruler must expect grave disorder and poverty'.⁶⁴ In the *St Albans Compilation*, as discussed above, the last two books stem from an equally ominous deathbed vision, when Alexander foresees the violence that will overrun his empire and ensures civil war by tossing the 'apple of discord' among his surviving officers. Yet in Orderic's telling, violence looms not only over the political future but over the personal past as well. Here, as he reflects on the conquest that defined his place in history, William laments:

I treated the native inhabitants of the kingdom with unreasonable severity, cruelly oppressed high and low, unjustly disinherited many, and caused the death of thousands by starvation and war, especially in Yorkshire [...]. In mad fury I descended on the English of the north like a raging lion, and ordered that their homes and crops with all their equipment and furnishings should be burnt at once and their great flocks and herds of sheep and cattle slaughtered everywhere. So I chastised a great multitude of men and women with the lash of starvation and, alas! was the cruel murderer of many thousands, both young and old, of this fair people.⁶⁵

Such a confession evokes a range of possible reactions, and whether or not William merits admiration or sterner judgment depends, of course, on a given writer's perspective. Kings and conquerors and peacemakers and tyrants all inspire moralities on account of their stature: most recognizably, depictions of Fortune's Wheel from Boethius to the late Middle Ages insist that an individual of any age (and indeed of all ages) will inevitably be cast from her favour, and none attest to the legibility of this popular icon more than rulers. This brand of morality generally lacks personal responsibility and insists instead on the universal experience of death, no matter how elevated one's lot in life

⁶⁴ Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. by Chibnall, iv (1973), 83.

⁶⁵ Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. by Chibnall, iv (1973), 95.

— a higher social or political status merely makes for a more effective lesson on mortality. In the entry for 1087, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* responds to William's death in such a manner:

Alas, how deceitful and untrustworthy is this world's prosperity. He who had been a powerful king and lord of many a land, had then of all the land only a seven-foot measure; and he who was once clad in gold and gems, lay then covered with earth.⁶⁶

Godfrey of Cambrai, prior of Winchester Abbey, eulogizes William in similar fashion:

Your deep-rooted strength compelled kings and peoples to succumb to you, and death compelled you to succumb to it; outstanding in your riches, you held the widest of realms, and now a narrow house holds you, stripped of your wealth.⁶⁷

Rather than condemning William, these statements dismiss him as just another mortal creature whose power and wealth could not hinder death. Such sentiments regarding Alexander were naturally popular as well, and several late medieval interpolations survive of the story of the philosophers who visit the conqueror's grandiose tomb and utter dismissive remarks. In the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, for example, the philosophers comment that 'Hier fust tot le monde a ly trop petit; | Huy une petite cave assez le suffit' ('Yesterday the whole world was too small for Alexander, but today a little hole is sufficient for him').⁶⁸

Paul Binski defines 'good death' in the Middle Ages as dependent on the will, a document that ensures that one's material possessions are distributed in an orderly fashion, and 'bad death' as a sudden and violent act in opposition to idealized chivalric death on the battlefield.⁶⁹ Alexander, of course, suffered a 'bad death' as a conqueror whose belligerent career ended with the shocking crime of regicide and whose inability to appoint an heir instigated such civil vio-

⁶⁶ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Whitelock, p. 163

⁶⁷ *The Anglo-Latin Satirical Poets*, ed. by Wright, II, 149: 'Succubuisse tibi reges populosque coegit | Insita vis, te mors succubuisse tibi. | Praepollens opibus latissima regna tenebas, | Nunc opibus nudum te domus arcta tenet'.

⁶⁸ Thomas of Kent, *The Anglo-Norman Alexander*, ed. by Foster, I, 8013–14. Peter Comestor composed the original passage in his *Disciplina clericalis*, and it was also interpolated by Ranulf Higden in his *Polychronicon*, John Gower in his *Vox clamantis*, and, in a hand as late as the sixteenth century, in the *St Albans Compilation* in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius Coll., MS 154/204, fol. 156^r.

⁶⁹ Binski, *Medieval Death*, pp. 35–50.

lence that his empire lay in fragments across three continents. As argued above, these events as described in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 — in the *Parva recapitulatio* and its examination of troubled succession and revolt — have a particular significance for contemporary England. This text aims not only to reject romance and to reintroduce a neglected moment in Macedonian history (particularly one so relevant for late-eleventh-century England) but also to undermine the sympathy that dictated Alexander's reception and cast doubt on the efficacy of empire building. For the first scribe of the Royal manuscript, who ends his contribution with an epitaph on Alexander, the conqueror was to be remembered as one who controlled the world for twelve years but was poisoned by Antipater in the flowering of his reign. As the *Parva recapitulatio*, the *St Albans Compilation*, and the *Roman de toute chevalerie* examined the ramifications of Alexander's campaigns in terms of excessive violence, the alienation of his countrymen, and the treachery of those nearest him, the Macedonian empire and its leader became symbols not of tragedy but of failure and futility. The tenor of this changing reception, similar to the deathbed speech that Orderic Vitalis attributes to a regretful William I and apparent in Anglo-Latin epitaphs for Alexander, centres on the unsettling memorial of a ruler most remembered and most condemned for warfare.

Epitaphia Alexandri

From the twelfth century as well, three copies of a lengthy epitaph in hexameters survive in Cambridge, CUL, MS Mm.5. 29, BL, MS Royal 15. C. vi, and BL, MS Cotton Titus A. xxvii that help to rewrite Alexander's legacy at the time. These expanded epitaphs build on the older, four-line version first found in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, seen in the concluding statement below:

Quicquid in humanis constat uirtutibus altis | Exuperat magnus belli uirtute chorus-
 ruscus | Orbis Alexander domitor seclique subactor. | Terra necne mari uirtute
 potens speciali | Quem non perduri ualuerunt frangere muri | Eius nec mentem
 pelagus superare furem | Quin mucrone suo uastaret cuncta cruento | Atque
 solo muros equaret funditus altos.

Hunc sic magnanimum nimium cunctisque tremendum | Tellus quem timuit
 pontus quem ferre nequiuit | Et cuius reges robur stupere potentes | Quemque
 duces ualidi metuebant necne tiranni | Concussit subito mulier conspecta timore
 | Quamuis sit protinus pulsus uirtute superba | Terror et in tumidam conuersus
 pectoris iram | Mens tamen est mutata uiri turbataque uirtus | Hic quem pugnan-
 tum non quiuit sternere ferrum | Milia conserto nec fortia multa duello | Uincere
 prefortis ualuerunt robore cordis | Succubuit leto sumpto cum melle ueneno.

Whatever one finds in the best examples of human strength, Alexander the Great, gleaming with martial might, master of the world and governor of his age, surpassed. He possessed unique power on land and sea alike. No sturdy ramparts could subdue him, nor could the sea vanquish his raging fighting spirit. With his bloody sword he laid waste to everything in his path, and he brought lofty walls completely down to the ground.

This man so high-minded and dreadful to all — whom the earth feared, and the sea could not endure, and at whose strength powerful kings marvelled, and whom leaders and mighty lords feared — was struck with sudden fear by the sight of a woman. Although his fear was pushed aside by his proud strength and changed into anger swelling within his breast, his mind was still altered and his fortitude disturbed. This man whom neither the sword of his enemies nor brave thousands upon thousands in continuous war could conquer because of the strength of his heart's resolve was killed by lethal poison mixed with sweet wine.⁷⁰

In the majority of later manuscripts in which it occurs, this epitaph is divided into these two stanzas.⁷¹ The first tells of Alexander without any historical context as an ancient king unleashing his unquenchable desire for conquest upon a world powerless to stop him, and the line crammed with extra feet ('This man so high-minded and dreadful to all') transitions to the second stanza and its unusual account of Alexander's fall, in which he is killed, per tradition, by poison, but before his death a sudden, mysterious terror associated with a woman seizes him.⁷² Cambridge, St John's, MS G. 16 attempts to identify the woman in the unique reading of its thirteenth line, in which she and her 'portent' strike Alexander with fear ('Horribilis protus concussit femina monstro'), an act that confirms that one scribe, at least, understood in the lines a reference to the half-human, half-bestial child born in Babylon, as featured in romances.⁷³ As the

⁷⁰ BL, MS Cotton Titus A. xxvii, fols 213^v–14^r.

⁷¹ The stanzas are so divided in Cambridge, CUL, MS Mm. 5. 29 and the thirteenth-century BL, MS Royal 12. C. iv and BL, MS Cotton Galba E. xi. The twenty-line epitaph also appears in Cambridge, Pembroke Coll., MS 258, BnF, MS nouv. acq. lat. 873, and Worcester, Cath. Libr., MS F. 172. Keough, 'Another Epitaphium Alexandri', edits this last MS, a highly corrupt late-fifteenth-century copy. Hilka, 'Studien zur Alexandersage', pp. 70–71, and Hill, 'Epitaphia Alexandri in English Medieval Manuscripts', edit the various types of epitaphs.

⁷² Ross, 'Parva recapitulatio: An English Collection of Texts Relating to Alexander the Great', p. 162 and Hill, 'Epitaphia Alexandri in English Medieval Manuscripts', p. 103, n. 8 suggest Candace, the queen who entrapped him in her bedroom, and the mother of the prodigy in Babylon.

⁷³ Hill, 'Epitaphia Alexandri in English Medieval Manuscripts', p. 100. See above, Chapter 2, p. 55.

Valerius *Epitome* in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 relates, Alexander's prophet sees the sickly human portion of the child as signifying the conqueror and his impending death and the beastly lower portion as the king's successors who will initiate a civil war after his death. Alexander is speechless, and the text flatly reports that 'Hec interpretatio non modicam Alexandro mestitiam intulit' ('This interpretation filled him with no little sadness').⁷⁴

The prophecy of his impending death alters, however, the tone of this epitaph. The second stanza suggests Alexander's punishment for his actions in the first, with its record of unjustified wars and suffering enemies.⁷⁵ In this reading, the twenty lines fall neatly into two divisions: the first eight (up to 'he brought lofty walls completely down to the ground') address the king's unstoppable military might, while the remaining twelve introduce the manner of his death. Indeed, only with the second division, the twelve lines so clearly distinguished in several manuscripts as a separate stanza, does the tone of the epitaph become evident. The focus of this latter segment is squarely on Alexander's death, and as much as the versifier has exalted the ancient conqueror — 'magnanimus', 'tremendus', the source of fear and the symbol of strength — the entire epitaph hinges on the one instance of terror provoked in him by the woman. What he learns because of this woman undermines his 'mens' and 'uirtus', his tools of domination throughout the previous lines that now fail him for the first time, and the poem hastens towards his death in Babylon. In this epitaph, Alexander merits no tragedy and seemingly faces due capital punishment, and the overlying irony that he who causes fear and death in the first verses finds them for himself in the last could not be more apparent. More striking still is that both this epitaph and the earlier version that it interpolates from the exemplar in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 (which concludes with the statement, 'That is, for twelve years Alexander oppressed the world trembling beneath him and struck down its kingdoms with his sword') present a troubling assessment of the conqueror before the narratives of laudatory romances. In both versions, he is reported to have induced warfare into and laid waste to innocent kingdoms, then to have died suddenly.

⁷⁴ BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, fol. 56^v.

⁷⁵ The readings of the epitaph in Cambridge, CUL, MS Mm. 5. 29 and BL, MS Royal 12. C. iv and BL, MS Cotton Galba E. xi introduce the second stanza with 'Sic quem pugnantum non quivit sternere ferrum'. The second stanza then reads (with added italics): 'Although his fear was pushed aside by his proud strength and changed into anger swelling within his breast, his mind was still altered and his fortitude disturbed. *So it was that he* whom neither the sword of his enemies nor brave thousands upon thousands in continuous war could conquer because of the strength of his heart's resolve was killed by lethal poison mixed with sweet wine'.

Informed by the patristic anxiety over the conqueror, as seen especially in the Orosian passages of the Royal manuscript, the unsettling portrayal in these Anglo-Latin epitaphs equally recalls the account of his belligerence in ⁱ Maccabees. The biblical passage digests Macedonian history into two significant episodes, Alexander's conquest of Persia and the deathbed division of his empire:

et factum est postquam Alexander Philippi Macedo qui primus regnavit in Graecia egressus de terra Cethim Darium regem Persarum et Medorum constituit proelia multa et omnium obtinuit munitiones et interfecit reges terrae et pertransit usque ad fines terrae et accepit spolia multitudinis gentium et siluit terra in conspectu eius et congregavit virtutem exercituum fortem nimis et exaltatum est et elevatum cor eius et obtinuit regiones gentium et tyrannos et facti sunt illi in tributum et post haec decidit in lectum et cognovit quia moritur et vocavit pueros suos nobiles qui secum erant nutriti a iuventute et divisit illis regnum suum cum adhuc viveret et regnavit Alexander annis duodecim et mortuus est et obtinuerunt pueri eius regnum unusquisque in loco suo et inposuerunt sibi omnes diademata post mortem eius et filii eorum post eos annis multis et multiplicata sunt mala in terra.

Then it later came to pass that Alexander the son of Philip the Macedonian, who first reigned in Greece, set out from the land of Cethim against Darius king of the Persians and Medes. He fought many battles, took the strongholds of all his opponents, and slew the kings of the earth. He even reached the ends of the earth and took the spoils of many nations, and the earth was quiet before him. He gathered his strength and a very strong army, and his heart was exalted and lifted up. He subdued countries of nations, and princes, and they became tributaries to him. And after these things, he fell down upon his bed and knew that he should die. He called his attendants, the nobles that were brought up with him from his youth, and he divided his kingdom among them, while he was yet alive. Alexander reigned twelve years, and he died. His attendants made themselves kings every one in his place, and they all put crowns upon themselves after his death, and their sons after them many years, and evils were multiplied in the earth.⁷⁶

Here, Alexander's aggression, his defeat of 'the kings of the earth', and his global *imperium* built on belligerence lead him perilously close to outright villainy, reflective of the attitudes of such patristic writers as Augustine and Orosius, both of whom condemn Alexander for this very martial behaviour described in the Maccabean account.

Central to this condemnation was Alexander's pagan identity, and a third type of epitaph, independent of the previous versions, further proves just how

⁷⁶ I Maccabees 1. 1–10 (Douay-Rheims).

disquieting and discordant with the legendary accounts such Christian portrayals could be in Anglo-Latin manuscripts. The codex of this last verse epigraph, the late-thirteenth-century Cambridge, CUL, MS Kk. 4. 25 offers the same standard romances, the Valerius *Epitome* and the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, as BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, and it, too, begins with a drawing of Alexander. This portrait, in which he sits enthroned with his right leg crossed over his left knee and a sceptre in his right hand, has received considerable scrutiny relative to the Royal manuscript, but no consensus has emerged as to what, exactly, the artist intended. Much of the confusion stems from the fact that interpretation of this portrait has hinged on one problematical detail, Alexander's crossed legs, and whether that posture suggests good or bad kingship. Although Nigel Morgan identifies Alexander generically as 'seated in the pose of authority',⁷⁷ others have traced the difficult history of this gesture in portrayals of despotic and traditionally Eastern kings.⁷⁸ Disagreement over this visual representation of Alexander has led, however, to a neglect of its textual counterpart just above it.

These twelve hexameters have gone unnoticed, but together with the drawing they dominate the page, and the eye cannot help but be drawn to them, just as it would be to the caption of an image:

Armipotens Alexandri hic conscripta tenentur | Ortus occasus nec non et prelia
seua | Per mare per terras que quondam gesserat ipse. | Ipse manu ualida que nulli
parcere nouit | Omnia quin potius igni ferroque peremit | Ac fere per totum bel-
lorum incendia mundum | Miscuit atque omnes excelsas subruit urbes. | Qui mare
qui terras quique aera terruit ipsum | Classibus et populis iaculis pariterque sagittis.
| Uis quoque quem ferri hominumue potencia numquam | Uincere perualuit uino
pariterque ueneno | Uictus et extinctus herebi penetralia scandit.

Herein are contained accounts of the birth and the death of Alexander, mighty in arms, and also the savage battles that he waged on land and sea. With a firm hand that knew not how to spare but preferred to lay waste to all things with fire

⁷⁷ Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, 1, 101.

⁷⁸ See Wright, 'An Image Fit for a King: The Glazier Psalter Reconsidered', p. 91; Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 137; and Brieger, *English Art: 1216–1307*, pp. 149–50. The last alone considers the poem above the portrait and the possibility that 'the pose might indicate the oriental despot in contrast to the nobler concept of kingship'; however, the prevalence of the pose in English representations of monarchs and in particular its association with David in the Glazier Psalter (as Wright argues) hinders any unified interpretation. Cambridge, Trinity Coll., MS O. 9. 34, the mid-thirteenth-century copy of the *Roman de toute chevalerie* features, for example, both Alexander and Darius in cross-legged poses throughout.

and sword, he stirred up the flames of war throughout nearly the entire world, and overthrew all of its lofty cities. He spread terror through land, sea, and even the sky itself with his navy and infantry and his spears and arrows alike. He whom neither the strength of the sword nor the might of men was ever able to conquer was overcome by poisoned wine, and when he died, he descended into the deepest recesses of Erebus.⁷⁹

It is immediately apparent that although these lines introduce Alexander and the subsequent narratives of the manuscript, they essentially serve as an epitaph and implant in the reader's mind a specific and pejorative conception of him before the beginning of any other account in the codex. Belligerence and constant campaigning comprise, to be sure, the Valerius *Epitome*, but in this romance Alexander's valour, daring, and love of exploration support and even justify his efforts for global conquest. Nothing in this legendary version of his career incriminates him for spreading war, and he is a noble king and soldier whose ingenuity and success are admirable and whose sudden death deserves lament. These twelve hexameters present, conversely, a drastically different view of Alexander. As in Orosius's *Historiae adversum paganos*, his life marked a dark era of history, and his success generated misery for others rather more than honour for himself.⁸⁰

The concluding lines also adapt the ending of the Valerius *Epitome*, wherein once Alexander, unconquerable by men but overcome by poisoned wine, dies, he simply lay buried ('*extinctus occubuit*'). Here, however, he is the pagan cast into the underworld ('*extinctus herebi penetralia scandit*'). Such a conclusion distinctly preserves him as a relic of the pagan past, and as a result, these verses find Alexander trapped in history and neither applicable to Christian re-tellings of the pagan past nor, would it seem, imitable for Christian kings. Moreover, if the artist knew that his cross-legged Alexander was associated with tyrants and villainous kings, then the verses and the portrait coincide in their depictions and prove again that scribes and illustrators were not opposed to inserting critical portrayals of him into codices of romances that otherwise glorified

⁷⁹ Cambridge, CUL, MS Kk. 4. 5, fol. 18^v. Hilka, 'Studien zur Alexandersage', p. 71, edits these verses with some orthographical emendation.

⁸⁰ The origin of these verses is unknown. They survive in a few Continental manuscripts, almost all of which feature the history of Curtius Rufus as the central narrative. Although this copy in Cambridge University Library is one of the earliest, there is no evidence to confirm that the poem originated in England. Dosson, *Étude sur Quinte-Curce*, p. 363, associates them with 'des œuvres à prétentions historiques'. Indeed, the verses would have been more suitable as an epitaph for the Roman history of Alexander than for the Valerius *Epitome*.

him. In swaying the reader to think unfavourably of Alexander even before he engages with the book as a whole, while the Valerius *Epitome* emphasizes his tragic death, this folio presents another contact point between historical sources and their distaste for the conqueror and romances and their admiration. Collectively, these longer verse epitaphs paint a bleak picture of Alexander's career, associated therein with conflagration and terror and generally informed by the patristic perspective. Indeed, for those amenable to this perspective or the philosophically informed Roman view of Alexander — whether fraught with the images of turmoil in these longer Anglo-Latin epitaphs or constructed around his gradual and destructive corruption in the *St Albans Compilation* — admiring and imitating him were becoming less viable options. This, then, was the influence of monastic scriptoria, which had effectively disseminated these views throughout the twelfth century and undeniably tarnished Alexander's reputation by investigating the most condemning of classical sources. Despite this recovery of both pre-Christian Roman and patristic attitudes, opposition was mounting in the investigations into classical literature at universities. Alexander was not yet to be reinvented — that would not occur until humanism brought Greek texts to Western Europe in the fifteenth century — but his usefulness for modern kingship would soon be reconsidered, particularly with the dissemination of his famed tutor's ethical and political writings.

Part Two

Alexander and the Education of Kings

FROM MONASTICISM TO SCHOLASTICISM

Twelfth-century monasticism had cast considerable aspersions on Alexander's character, but the aforementioned interpolators of Roman narratives of ancient Macedon were not alone in examining his career through the investigation of classical texts. While the Benedictine writers William of Malmesbury and Ralph Gubium had already provided an impressive textual record of the Roman anxieties over Alexander's rule and examined his moral character through their intimate knowledge of this classical perspective, the twelfth century also witnessed the application of these concerns to pedagogical tracts. In this burgeoning "Mirror-for-Princes" genre, the efforts of monastic writers who had collated Christian and classical texts on Alexander (both with the corrective aim of the *Parva recapitulatio* and the encyclopaedic one of the *St Albans Compilation*) led to a public debate, as the interests in the mistakes and misgivings found in his career evolved from intellectual studies to practical applications of royal education. While such early advocates of this genre as Gerald of Wales and John of Salisbury used Alexander to criticize what they considered unscrupulous kingship in the troubling political scene of the twelfth century, this pejorative conception of the conqueror would not last. With the rise of scholasticism and the transmission of Aristotle's ethical and political writings — especially the newfound influence of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*, translated by Roger Bacon in the 1270s — the thirteenth-century reception of Alexander was founded largely on the belief that he represented the ideal ruler because of his education. The lessons offered by the philosopher to his conqueror-ward offered the pedagogical means of conquest (not merely for Alexander but for anyone who read and adhered to this book as

well), and as guidebooks to moral conduct in the age of scholasticism increasingly promoted Alexander's virtues, so this reception increasingly diverged from the highly critical monastic treatment of him in the preceding century.

This marked the beginning, then, of a new conception of Alexander under a new intellectual movement, reliant on the changing influence of classical philosophers. The Benedictines had established the *Philippic Histories* as the preeminent historical source on the conqueror, yet its narrative of a ruler's rise due to genius and skill and fall due to inherent vices and the lure of destructive, oriental behaviour also provided the basic Roman Stoic assessment of Alexander's troubling reign. Indeed, the chronicler Ralph of Diceto even identifies Justin as a 'philosopher' in a list of distinguished writers,¹ and many of the concerns with Alexander's immoral behaviour in his epitome of the *Philippic Histories* are commensurate with those underscored by Seneca. From the twelfth century onward, Seneca became the most influential Stoic for medieval writers, as the availability of his writings (and those wrongly attributed to him) increased in the centuries after his inclusion in William of Malmesbury's *Polyhistor* and as his peer in the trinity of philosophers, Aristotle, gained a wider audience.² As the premier Roman philosophical critic of Alexander widely known at the time, Seneca's critical attitude towards Alexander largely derived from certain passages of his *Epistulae morales*, in which he castigates the conqueror for the vices of ambition and drunkenness and represents him not as a glorious conqueror but one who gained notoriety for killing his own men, destroyed his rational mind with alcohol, and was led by a mad desire for conquest.³ The influence of this criticism is also apparent, however, on the developing "Mirror-for-

¹ Ralph of Diceto, *Opera historica*, ed. by Stevenson, I, 20, includes 'Justinus philosophus Trogi Pompeii adabbreviator' under 'De viris illustribus quo tempore scripserint'.

² Besides the *Epistulae morales*, the pseudo-Senecan *De remediis fortuitorum*, a Stoic treatise on behaviour and moderation, circulated widely. Both works appear in the *Registrum Anglie de libris doctorum*, ed. by Rouse and Rouse, an early-fourteenth-century catalogue of books available in England and compiled by Oxford Franciscans, but Seneca had been known in monastic libraries before and would later enjoy, of course, greater popularity closer to the Renaissance humanists. For the evidence of Seneca among religious orders, see Sharpe and others, eds, *English Benedictine Libraries*, pp. 179, 189, 671; Stoneman, ed., *Dover Priory*, p. 86; Friis-Jensen and Willoughby, eds, *Peterborough Abbey*, pp. 84, 95, 100; Barker-Benfield, ed., *St Augustine's Abbey*, II, 974, 1033–42; Webber and Watson, eds, *The Libraries of the Augustinian Canons*, p. 433; Humphreys, ed., *The Friars' Libraries*, pp. 69, 110–11; and Bell, ed., *The Libraries of the Cistercians*, pp. 77, 102.

³ See, e.g., Seneca, *Ad Lucilium epistularum moralium*, ed. by Hense, 2. 83, 2. 91, 3. 94, 3. 113, and 3. 119.

Princes" genre', particularly in the work of two twelfth-century writers, Gerald of Wales and John of Salisbury.

Alexander in the Pedagogical Writings of Gerald of Wales and John of Salisbury

With a clerical voice analogous to the monastic writers in the previous chapter, Gerald evaluates Alexander through both a traditional, patristic agenda and one reflective of the Benedictines' recent dissemination of Roman attitudes towards him. Like those writers who reflected the Nineteen-Year Anarchy and twelfth-century periods of revolt in their treatments of ancient Macedon, Gerald examines the depths of Alexander's tyranny and his applicability to the twelfth-century political scene, with its power struggles and destructive kingship. He wrote *De principis instructione*, for example, because of his concern that King John, whom he criticizes as a tyrant — 'rex effectus, tyrannica quoque suis diebus superbia tumens' ('when he became king, he, too, swelled with tyrannical pride in his reign') — divinely punished by his own baronial rebellions, is all too typical of modern rulers.⁴ Gerald's preface exudes the vehemence with which he curses bad government and considers Alexander an ideal example for his pedagogical agenda:

Quis enim hodie princeps, qui non indultam desuper potestatem ad omnes animi motus, ad omnem carnis libitum ac luxum, ad omnem pravae tyrannidis atrocitatem, indifferenter extendat, et, tanquam quicquid libet liceat [...]. Quis enim hodie princeps, qui principium exile, medium fragile ac corruptibile, cadaver post exitum vile cogitet? Juxta illud philosophicum responsum tyranno, qui quasi de duce nuper inunctus fuerat in regem de rege statim sublimandus in imperatorem, jactabunde quaerenti 'Quid fui, quid sum, quid ero?' — 'Vile sperma, vas stercoreum, esca vermium'. Dicitur enim Alexandro Macedoni, gradatim ad dignitates ascendenti et inde jactanti ac glorianti, a Dionysio philosopho sic responsum fuisse.

What ruler is there today who does not indifferently exert his overly indulgent power towards every whim of his mind, every pleasure and indulgence of the flesh, every atrocity of tyrannical depravity and, as though anything he desires is permissible [...]. What ruler is there today who thinks that his kingdom is small or medium-sized, fragile and corruptible, and that his body is worth nothing after death? So goes the philosopher's response to the tyrant who had recently been

⁴ Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, ed. by Warner, VIII (1891), 326. For Gerald's agenda, see Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, I (1974), 321.

anointed from a duke to a king and immediately elevated from king to emperor and boastfully asked, 'What was I, what am I, and what will I be?' — 'Worthless seed, a vessel of excrement, food for worms.' Indeed, this was said to Alexander the Great, who had climbed by degrees to his lofty position and thus boasted and revelled in it, and such a response was given to him by the philosopher Dionysius.⁵

Here, Gerald advances two ideas by which his contemporaries defined Alexander: depravities and excess distinguish the tyrant, and all rulers, even the most famous in history, are subject to mortality. The latter amalgamates a tradition of dismissing pagan rulers that dates back to the Church Fathers with the more recent dismissal of Alexander's accomplishments, in particular, among twelfth-century clerical and monastic writers and their anecdotes of his death and burial. The anxieties over excess and luxury stem, however, from the Roman notions of tyranny that these writers had recently reapplied to the portrayal of Alexander. As discussed in the previous chapter, the same charge of indulgence ('luxum') appears in the middle books of the *St Albans Compilation*, as its source, the *Philippic Histories*, offered the most extensive record of Alexander's drunkenness, promiscuity, and orientalist foreign policy known in the Middle Ages.

Gerald sees ambition as Alexander's most recognizable but not most destructive vice, for he further criticizes the conqueror's excessive behaviour in insisting on his debilitating penchant for drink. A mind befuddled by alcohol undermines, of course, rational behaviour, the aims of education, and a king's ability to rule, and Gerald thus depicts Alexander as one who:

itaque praeter ambitionis vitium, quae raro in principum animis absque tyrannide regnare solet, ebriositatis vitio laboravit et tunc praecipue in domesticos et familiares suos desaevebat.

beyond the vice of ambition — which rarely holds sway over the minds of princes without leading to tyranny — laboured under the vice of drunkenness and then raged especially against those in his house and those who knew him.⁶

A lack of sobriety, following Gerald's opening admonition against sensuality, further instigates tyranny and leads to poor decisions. He distinguishes a king

⁵ Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, ed. by Warner, VIII (1891), 5. The identity of the philosopher Dionysius (perhaps mistaken for Diogenes) is unclear.

⁶ Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, ed. by Warner, VIII (1891), 58. Gerald cites the well-known moral anecdote in which he drunkenly presides over a trial and convicts the defendant, who cleverly appeals to a sober Alexander, since he was convicted by an inebriated one (pp. 58–59).

as a man who governs by raising arms in times of war and maintains laws in times of peace and a tyrant as one who seeks to fulfil his own desires and lead a depraved life. From his prefatory remarks, Gerald shows his concern with excess and carnality, and he does not simply attribute greed or ambition to Alexander's degradation. Rather, he dismisses the conqueror for leading a life of drunkenness that was fittingly ended by poisoned wine:

vir tantus, orientali totaliter orbe subacto, convocatis principibus suis in convivio publico, gaudio resolutus et vinolentus denique suorum insidiis vino, cui trans modestiam datus fuerat, periit venenato, sicut supra in capitulo de Providentia dictum est.

so great a man, after he had completely conquered the East and summoned his leaders to a public feast, was relaxed and intoxicated on his joy. In the end he died by poisoned wine, which he was given to drink beyond moderation, prepared by the treachery of his own men, just as it was said in the earlier chapter on Providence.⁷

Gerald's insistence on Alexander's inebriation reiterates the anxieties seen in the *St Albans Compilation* and anticipates the increasing concern with self-governance in the "Mirror-for-Princes" genre, but it also affirms his faith that tyrants will face justice for their transgressions. Applying Antiquity to his own age and examining the reasons behind a ruler's success and decline, Gerald views history through 'a system of explanation and interpretation based on God's purposes and man's sin and salvation' in dialogue with 'personified Fortune and the inevitable mutability of human affairs'.⁸ A tyrant is bound to fall, in other words, but he is also subject to divine punishment, a dynamic that Gerald had already witnessed in the career of Henry II. The man whom he had previously celebrated in the grandiose statement, 'certant enim cum orbe terrarum victoriae vestrae: cum a Pirenaeis montibus usque in occiduos et extremos borealis oceani fines, Alexander noster occidentalis, brachium extendisti' ('Your victories are determined against the world, since you, our western Alexander, have extended your arms from the Pyrenees to the westernmost limits of the northern ocean'), also faced recrimination for the murder of Thomas Becket and elicited Gerald's harshest criticism.⁹ A clear moral lesson lies in the tyrant's career,

⁷ Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, ed. by Warner, VIII (1891), 59.

⁸ Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, pp. 72–73.

⁹ Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, ed. by Warner, IV, (1873), 189–90. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, p. 71, classifies Books II and III of the *De principis instructione* as the moral examination of Henry's fall after 1185: 'Gerald wished, in these last two books, to present a drama of kingly hubris. Henry's fall was not only a vivid example of the mutability of human life, but also a moral tale. His fall

whether it be that of Henry or of any ruler culled from history. 'In principio florent' ('In the beginning, they flourish'), and they fulfil 'et in omne cordis desiderium, ut qui in sordibus sunt sordescant amplius, laxis habenis efferuntur' ('all their hearts desire, just as those who engage in sordid behaviour befool themselves all the more when their reins are relaxed'), but in the end, they suffer justice and are scattered like flowers to the four winds.¹⁰ As will be examined below, John of Salisbury also asserts that God strikes down tyrants (either through divine or human means), and in the case of Alexander, his own vices lead to self-destruction.¹¹ For both writers, the conqueror's flaws resulted less from success on the Eastern front than from his ambition and insobriety.

John approached Alexander from what is best considered a transitional perspective. Having studied under the leading scholastics of the day yet not a devotee of dialectic education,¹² he represents the middle ground of a classical humanist's view of Alexander between those of twelfth-century monastic writers, who generally adhered to the patristic and Stoic criticism of the conqueror, and thirteenth-century university writers, who generally promoted Alexander as an Aristotelian-educated, paradigmatic ruler. The very concern of classical humanism with 'the potentialities of man as a human being' and its dependence on Christian tenets of morality inform,¹³ in fact, John's portrait of the conqueror in the *Policraticus*, his compendium of politics and ethics. He opens Book Four, for example, by discussing the need for a prince to seek truth and knowledge, which he articulates in Philip of Macedon's request to Aristotle to tutor his son. 'Ex quo in principibus uirtus languit litterarum' ('When princes lack skill in letters'), the king believes, their very nobility is threatened, for 'sine sapientia nullus stare aut esse ualeat principatus' ('without wisdom no one's sovereignty can exist or be maintained').¹⁴ Alexander stands between admirable kingship and tyranny in the *Policraticus* because he encounters both the cor-

was the result of divine judgement. Throughout the successes of his reign Henry had failed to recognize their true author, God, and had obstinately persisted in his evil ways.

¹⁰ Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, ed. by Warner, VIII (1891), 326–27: 'in fine vero [...] et tanquam flores verni, quos Zephyri Favoniiue favor ad tempus eduxerant, Boreae subito Circiique flatibus emarcescunt' ('indeed, in the end [...] as flowers in the springtime, once reared to maturity by the favour of warm western winds in early spring, wilt with the sudden winds from the north and northwest').

¹¹ Nederman and Campbell, 'Priests, Kings, and Tyrants', p. 583.

¹² Packard, *Twelfth-Century Europe*, p. 162.

¹³ Packard, *Twelfth-Century Europe*, p. 206.

¹⁴ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. by Webb, I, 256.

ruptive power of success and the redemptive power of education. John's faith in a 'natural law [which] is meant to act on the conscience of the prince as on that of every human being' conflicts with his fears that Fortune, power, and civilization itself lead to degradation,¹⁵ and in this struggle that defines Alexander's legacy, he relies on both the *Philippic Histories* so valued by the Benedictines and Aristotle's ethical views so valued at Oxford and Paris.

First and foremost, his knowledge of the virtuous mean informs his conception of good rule, and for John, as for Aristotle, moderation leads equally to happiness, moral living, and successful kingship.¹⁶ Moreover, the moral instruction of a king prevents, in John's view, the very anxieties that twelfth-century monasticism was reasserting in the narrative of ancient Macedon, namely a lack of peace, a bad reputation, and an uneasy succession.¹⁷ Such instruction is primarily designed to improve one's moral character, which, as the Roman texts circulating in English monasteries had shown, was a major concern for Alexander's legacy. In John's telling, similar to that of Seneca, success and vice cannot be extricated, and the one naturally gives rise to the other. The opening words to the first book of the *Policraticus* introduce this relationship:

Among all of those things that important men are used to confronting, none of them may be thought more pernicious than that delightful allurements of fortune which turns one aside from the vision of truth. In so far as the world showers its riches and delights — those which renew and inflame the vicious eagerness for sensuous pleasure — the soul is tricked by a multiplicity of allurements into a captivity in which, alienated from itself, inner goodness decays as the desires are extended to the deceptions of various external things. If indeed virtue is hostile to prosperity, then wealth applauds its own in order to injure them; and this unhappy success follows in the path of fortune, so that in the end catastrophe occurs [...] the virtues are cut down at the root, the vices yield a crop, the light of reason is extinguished, and the whole man is carried headlong into miserable misfortune.¹⁸

This passage could just as well serve as the prefatory remarks to the *St Albans Compilation* and its lengthy portrayal of Alexander's degradation as he increased his power in the East. Much of John's agenda developed, in fact, because of the same political turmoil in Stephen's reign that, as argued in the previous chapter, inspired the St Albans text as well. For the *Policraticus*, 'the liberty which

¹⁵ Liebeschütz, *Mediaeval Humanism in the Life and Writings of John of Salisbury*, p. 5.

¹⁶ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, pp. 54–58.

¹⁷ Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, pp. 59–60.

¹⁸ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. by Nederman, p. 9.

sprang from Stephen's disputed kingship' and the subsequent 'assertion of individual purposes and [...] anarchical fighting of the nobility amongst themselves' inspired not a discussion of particular conquerors and empires but the nature of rule itself and the impediments to moral self-governance.¹⁹ Whereas a prince 'is obedient to law, and rules his people by a will that places itself at their service, and administers rewards and burdens within the republic under the guidance of law',²⁰ a tyrant destroys peace and seeks to subjugate others with violence rather than rule with law and order.²¹

This conception of tyranny had long since defined Alexander's legacy from a Christian perspective, and from Orosius's assessment that the conqueror held the world trembling beneath his sword in the earliest epitaph in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 to the longer, more inflammatory epitaphs that present Alexander as a terrifying war machine (discussed in the previous chapter), this condemnation maintained an influence on later attitudes. Composing the *Policraticus* while these epitaphs remained in circulation and as Ralph Gubiun arranged his compendium on Macedonian history, John develops the perspectives of both. On the one hand, Alexander simply represents a belligerent pagan, but on the other, he offers a model of the human capacity for greatness that worldly power consistently undermines. John's Alexander is not, to be sure, without his virtues (e.g., generosity towards his men and his considerable skills at military leadership), but he wastes them because of the vice that both defined and undermined his legacy. In the *Policraticus*, he is, in sum, 'plane miser dignusque miseria, cuius uirtutes omnes absorbuerat laudis insatiata et insatiabilis fames una' ('A man clearly wretched and worthy of misery, and a man whose virtues, every one, were devoured by the single unsatisfied and insatiable hunger for praise').²² The conqueror knows how to spare those undeserving of war (Book Four reports, for example, that the Brahman philosopher Dindimus convinces Alexander not to disturb their 'pax perpetua' ('perpetual peace')), but he cannot overcome his ambition for empire and glory.²³ In consulting the *Philippic Histories*, John, as did Ralph Gubiun at St Albans, conveys a man whose vices

¹⁹ Liebeschütz, *Mediaeval Humanism in the Life and Writings of John of Salisbury*, p. 46. Within this examination he adheres to definitions of good kings and tyrants that effectively bridge twelfth-century humanists with John Gower, whose views on education and kingship are discussed in the following chapter.

²⁰ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. by Nederman, p. 28.

²¹ Liebeschütz, *Mediaeval Humanism in the Life and Writings of John of Salisbury*, p. 51.

²² John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. by Webb, II, 247.

²³ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. by Webb, I, 271.

outmatched his virtues and who conquered others to quell his insecurities and fulfil his desires:

Ast in uno non modo patris sed omnium ingenuorum transcendit uitia, quod incontinentissimae fuit inuidiae, adeo ut etiam paterni triumphi ei lacrimas extorquerent ac si ei uirtus paterna omnium gerendorum praeiperet gloriam. Eos etiam aut propriis manibus interficiebat aut rapi praecipiebat ad penam, qui pater-nae uirtutis praeconia praedicabant.

But in one respect he exceeded the vices not only of his father [Philip] but of all free men: he was characterized by a most immoderate jealousy, so that even his father's triumphs caused him to cry, as if Philip's success would strip away the glory from all that he wished to accomplish himself. He even killed with his own hands or ordered to be put to torture those who publicly praised his father's greatness.²⁴

This passage reveals the influence of Seneca, whose similar criticism of Alexander's ambition and corruption were well transmitted in John's day. Alexander's obsessive competition with his father in the *Policraticus* echoes Seneca's Letter 94 of the *Epistulae morales*, in which he portrays Alexander as a man seized by a 'fury' to subjugate foreign peoples and driven to surpass his father and his divine predecessors:

Not content with the ruin of all the states which Philip had either conquered or bribed into bondage, he overthrew various commonwealths in various places and carried his weapons all over the world; his cruelty was tired, but it never ceased [...]. Already he has joined many kingdoms into one kingdom; already Greeks and Persians fear the same lord; already nations Darius had left free submit to the yoke: yet he passes beyond the Ocean and the Sun, deeming it shame that he should shift his course of victory from the paths which Hercules and Bacchus had trod.²⁵

In John's estimation, too, this lineage proved disastrous for Alexander. His virtues and vices were both greater than those of his father (a comparison that John derives from the *Philippic Histories*),²⁶ and his genius on the battlefield, coupled with his sense of competition, set the stage for his success and downfall equally. Philip was, John saw, a divided king, a lover of arms and feasts, capable of pity and treachery, and manipulative for his own ends, yet he possessed neither the ability nor the opportunity that his son enjoyed.²⁷

²⁴ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. by Webb, I, 336.

²⁵ Seneca, *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales*, trans. by Gummere, III, 51–53.

²⁶ For example, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. by Webb, I, 334–36.

²⁷ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. by Webb, I, 335.

Alexander, with his meteoric rise to global power, offered an even more enticing opportunity for John's examinations of good rule and tyranny, as he was at once 'a man of genius and a model of humane behavior' and one whose 'very greatness induced him to undertake a gigantic enterprise of no value to humanity which perverted his character'.²⁸ Alexander, in other words, was not born into vice but fell prey to it as he expanded the boundaries of his empire, and John presents him as a conqueror not merely of increasingly immoral behaviour but also as one who squandered a privileged opportunity to escape history's ranks of tyrants. George Cary neatly defined the two predominant philosophical approaches to Alexander in Antiquity as such: the Stoics held that his education (even under the direction of Aristotle) could not eradicate his innate vices, which Fortune and his success in the East exacerbated to unconscionable extremes, while the Peripatetics believed that his education had instilled virtues in Alexander but that his success led to vices, which, in the end, denigrated but did not diminish his legacy.²⁹ Although the distinction between the two seems slight — both views remain, after all, critical of the conqueror — it remains an important one. Following the Stoic view of Alexander, twelfth-century monasticism had established the conception of a conqueror beyond redemption and damned by his inherent vices, yet John's classical humanist portrayal of Alexander suggests the gradual development of this belief. He maintains throughout the *Policraticus* that the conqueror possessed an elite intellect, even a certain genius, yet he also presents, in a Peripatetic fashion, an Alexander who could not handle the success that exacerbated his immoral tendencies and undermined both his achievements and his legacy. University writers after John, namely those more adherent to Aristotle than to Seneca and more demonstrative regarding Alexander's abilities than his failures, would lead this Peripatetic view towards a policy of outright admiration for the conqueror.

Over a millennium before the twelfth-century Renaissance, the basic story of Alexander's 'seduction by the luxury and decadence of the East [...] coupled with the political upheaval of the late Republic and early decades of the Principate' appealed to Roman writers, and when English writers sought historical parallels for the troubling events and reigns of the twelfth century, they turned to this same Alexander created by the Romans.³⁰ As the tyrannical head of an empire built on and destroyed by belligerent ambition, Alexander's repu-

²⁸ Liebeschütz, *Mediaeval Humanism in the Life and Writings of John of Salisbury*, p. 71.

²⁹ Cary, 'Petrarch and Alexander the Great', pp. 43–44.

³⁰ Spencer, *The Roman Alexander*, p. 83.

tation suffered in this period as in no other before the twentieth century: the anonymous redactor of the *Parva recapitulatio*, Ralph Gubium in his *St Albans Compilation*, Thomas of Kent in his *Roman de toute chevalerie*, and John of Salisbury and Gerald of Wales in their discourses on moral and political philosophy all condemn the Macedonian empire for the causes of its fall, causes that they saw paralleled in twelfth-century England. There remained, however, one outlet of salvation for the conqueror's legacy. When Gerald of Wales praised Henry II as 'our western Alexander', he embraced his ruler as morally upright and educated, a precursor of Plato's philosopher-king who deserved to be elevated because of the range of his intellectual and ethical qualities. In the *De principis instructione*, then, Gerald's hope was to codify moral and political instruction that he had lauded in Henry before the king's fall from grace, and as this genre of the *speculum principis* became increasingly popular in the age of scholasticism, education — specifically an education based on Aristotle's precepts regarding virtue and vice — led to a widespread re-assessment of Alexander's effectiveness as a political model.

The Secretum secretorum and the Plantagenets

Beginning in the 1240s, when Robert Grosseteste produced his monumental translation and commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* as 'the Aristotelian movement in the Schools was still on its upward swing',³¹ Alexander's reception underwent a considerable transformation. While monasticism had maintained both the Stoic disapproval of Alexander and the Augustinian stance that pagans were incapable of exhibiting any genuinely admirable virtue, the scholastics redefined the conqueror's legacy in a period that adhered to the Thomistic belief in 'a natural morality, discerned by natural reason, and universally valid because of the unity of human nature'³² and the gradual privileging of romanced Antiquity over religious views and interpretations of history. For Alexander's reputation, this amounted to a sanctioned respect for his virtues, particularly his desires for an empire, and a justification for emulating

³¹ McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, p. 24. McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, p. 119 describes this translation as including a summary of the *Ethics*, a commentary, philological glossae, and a pseudo-Aristotelian work on the passions. Grosseteste initiated the two-hundred-year period of Aristotelian influence that Schmitt, 'Pseudo-Aristotle in the Latin Middle Ages', p. 6, identifies.

³² Jaffa, *Thomism and Aristotelianism*, p. 23.

him, particularly in the fight against enemies abroad that many in the period regarded as a threat to England and Christendom and that required a defender of Alexander's stature. This suddenly elevated view of the conqueror began, fittingly enough, with the transmission of his famed tutor's ethical writings.

Although the study of the *Ethics* and moral philosophy flourished with the rise of humanism from the late fourteenth to the sixteenth century, Aristotelian and pseudo-Aristotelian ethical and political writings inspired in England an earlier tradition of commentaries that attracted university and monastic readers alike.³³ As Steven J. Williams has outlined, the most influential work of the pseudo-Aristotelian corpus, the *Secretum secretorum*, is rightly considered a text of the university curriculum (several manuscripts circulated at Cambridge and Oxford), but as the Dominicans and other orders attended universities these manuscripts travelled back to monastic libraries.³⁴ Surviving booklists bear further witness to this intellectual exchange. Copies of the *Ethics*, as well as the *Secretum* and other pseudo-Aristotelian letters to Alexander reached St Albans as early as the late twelfth century, the Cistercian abbey in Bordesley by 1306, the Benedictines in Ramsey soon thereafter, the Austin Friars at York and the Benedictines in Dover, Peterborough, and Evesham by the late fourteenth century, the Premonstratensian abbey in Titchfield by 1400, and St Augustine's, Canterbury by the late fifteenth century.³⁵ From the middle of the thirteenth century to the early fourteenth century, the *Secretum secretorum* became a text with universal appeal, as it found owners at Oxford, Paris, and Cambridge, among the friars, and among the monastic orders.³⁶

Central in this wider knowledge of and interest in Aristotle are two Oxford Friars, Grosseteste and Roger Bacon, whose respective translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Secretum secretorum* stand about thirty

³³ Luscombe, 'The Ethics and the Politics in Britain in the Middle Ages', pp. 340–42.

³⁴ Williams, *The Secret of Secrets*, pp. 208–16.

³⁵ Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey*, pp. 110–11, cites Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Selden Supra 24 as an anonymous translation of the *Ethics*. Bell, ed., *The Libraries of the Cistercians*, pp. 8, 210; Sharpe and others, eds, *English Benedictine Libraries*, pp. 145, 411; Humphreys, ed., *The Friars' Libraries*, pp. 45, 66, 118; Stoneman, ed., *Dover Priory*, pp. 30, 75, 92–93, 107, 161; Friis-Jensen and Willoughby, eds, *Peterborough Abbey*, pp. 171, 173; Bell, ed., *The Libraries of the Cistercians*, p. 210; and Barker-Benfield, ed., *St Augustine's Abbey*, II, 1056–58. For a general overview of the pseudo-Aristotelian corpus, see Schmitt and Knox, eds, *Pseudo-Aristoteles Latinus*.

³⁶ Williams, *The Secret of Secrets*, pp. 195–97.

years apart.³⁷ While the latter would inspire countless guidebooks for kings and 'claim an influence far greater than many of the most influential of genuine Aristotelian works', the *Ethics* and the *Secretum* share some fundamental Aristotelian concepts.³⁸ The virtuous mean had already informed John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, as discussed above, but the *Secretum* adds several other well-known dicta of Aristotle's moral philosophy, including warnings against lust ('lusts lead to the ascendancy of the animal soul'), the rational desire for honour and fame ('the first instrument of reason is the desire of a good name'), the self-serving behaviour of tyrants ('to love sovereignty for its own sake leads to tyranny'), and overcoming the passions ('when passion stirs in [the king] he should suppress it by the power of reason, and rule his own soul').³⁹ An immediate divide is apparent, then, between this morality prescribed by Aristotle to his royal pupil and the Roman texts that so defined Alexander in the preceding century. The *Philippic Histories* and Seneca's *Epistulae morales* had already transmitted their own bleak, moral and philosophical assessment of the conqueror, and with regards to this list of rules of virtue in the *Secretum*, the Roman Alexander egregiously breaks every one. His desire for fame had underpinned Alexander narratives since Anglo-Saxon England, and the influence of the *Philippic Histories* and Seneca in the twelfth century, equally insistent on his ambition and violently erratic behaviour, offered a portrait of the tyrant most abhorred by the Stoics.

With Roger Bacon's translation of the *Secretum secretorum* in the late thirteenth century, however, Aristotle's education of Alexander provided a means of attaining not only proper moral behaviour but also military success. The Macedonian empire now attested to both the philosopher and the conqueror's abilities:

Dum igitur viveret, convaluit Alexander in sanitatis observacione per observanciam sui sani consilii et imitatione precepti. Et ideo subjugavit sibi civitates, et triumphans adquisivit sibi cuncta regna, et totius mundi solus tenuit monarchiam, et in omnem terram exivit fama sua, et per omnia mundi climata omnes gentes et

³⁷ According to McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, p. 11, Grosseteste became lector to the Friars Minor at their Oxford school in 1229–30, about a decade before he began his translation. Williams, 'Roger Bacon and his Edition of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*', pp. 58–63 suggests a wide range for Bacon's translation of the *Secretum* (1270–92), but it is known that became a Friar Minor at Oxford c. 1257.

³⁸ Schmitt, 'Pseudo-Aristotle in the Latin Middle Ages', p. 5.

³⁹ Williams, *The Secret of Secrets*, pp. 23–26.

diverse naciones subiciebantur suo imperio et precepto, Arabes atque Perses neque fuit gens aliqua que auderet ei resistere in facto vel dicto.

While he lived, then, Alexander grew strong in minding his well-being through heeding [Aristotle's] sound counsel and following its precepts. On account of this, he subjugated cities to his rule, triumphantly sought out all kingdoms for himself, held sole control of the entire world, his reputation travelled to every land, every race and diverse nation in every climate of the world was subjugated under his authority and command, and neither the Arabs nor the Persians nor any other race dared resist him in deed or speech.⁴⁰

In their own books on royal morality, John of Salisbury and Gerald of Wales had presented Alexander cautiously as an individual capable of greatness, but one whose ambition and excessive behaviour got the better of his inherent promise and his privileged education. Bacon rather undermines these earlier examples of the “Mirror-for-Princes” genre’ and promotes an ‘Aristotle’ that had long been associated with a near-mystical pedagogy, secrets whose ‘tremendous power [...] allowed Alexander to conquer the world’, which ‘would be useful in the present-day struggle against Islam as well as in the upcoming battle with Antichrist.’⁴¹ Bacon’s intended recipient remains unknown, and while Henry III and Edward I have been suggested,⁴² their attraction to Alexander in an era when he became a model for building an empire as well as for preventing others from encroaching upon it is indicative of the growing fascination with the conception of the conqueror informed by pseudo-Aristotelian and romance notions.

For Henry, admiration for Alexander’s exploits and conquests was no slight matter, as he evidently cherished images of the ancient ruler throughout his reign and saw in Alexander an iconographic model for kingship, similar to the mighty victor in Bacon’s passage above. His interest in Alexander began at least as early as 1230, for from that year onward, the Calendar of Liberate Rolls contains several references to a painted ‘Chamber of Alexander’ at his palaces both in Clarendon and Nottingham.⁴³ Although there are no extant structures

⁴⁰ Bacon, *Opera hactenus inedita*, ed. by Steele, v (1920), 37–38.

⁴¹ Williams, ‘Roger Bacon and his Edition of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*’, p. 65.

⁴² Williams, ‘Roger Bacon and his Edition of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*’, pp. 66–67.

⁴³ References to such a chamber at Clarendon occur in *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls*, Henry III, I, 304, III (1937), 324, IV (1959), 90, and v (1961), 7; for Nottingham, see IV, 18.

to indicate what, exactly, Henry commissioned, a 1252 order to have painted 'the story of Alexander all about the queen's chamber' at Nottingham gives a strong impression of one layout, at least.⁴⁴ The king's visual narrative was presumably comprehensive enough to fill a room with a series of images comprising a 'story', rather than disjointed scenes, to be read by the eye from wall to wall, and the language of Henry's order has led to conjectures that illustrated books provided him with this panoramic narrative. Elizabeth Salter identified his penchant for 'a mixture of piety and romance', the latter of which terms is suggestive in itself, for Henry's interest in historical themes did not necessarily rely on Latin chronicles.⁴⁵ In the Pipe Rolls for 1237, just a few years before allusions to the 'Chamber of Alexander' at Clarendon occur, there is a record of payment for 'silver hasps and key for the King's great book (*magnum librum*) of Romances'.⁴⁶ Then in 1250 appears a request for a book, written in French, on the deeds of the Crusaders at Antioch, and it has been argued that the text in question was a romance, the *Chanson d'Antioche*.⁴⁷ If Henry enjoyed other romances and approved of them as exemplars for his murals, could he have similarly employed a manuscript like those of the illustrated Alexander romances gaining popularity in his day?

It is certainly an intriguing possibility. The earliest such romance in England is the Anglo-Norman *Roman de toute chevalerie*, which, despite its commentary on the demise of the Macedonian Empire, still presents Alexander's exploits in the East, particularly his conquest of Persia and victories over the diabolical foes Gog and Magog.⁴⁸ Although the earliest surviving copy of the *Roman* with its vast picture cycle dates to the middle of the thirteenth century (and thus too late for Henry's first recorded Alexander Chamber in 1230), the original text dates to the late twelfth century, and all of the complete manuscripts of this romance were illustrated or intended to be so. At the very least, it is quite likely that if he knew of this Anglo-Norman text, he would have known of its images as well. On the other hand, Henry could have had access to the illustrated French romances that were evidently being copied and illuminated in thir-

Furthermore, two entries from the summer of 1249 (III, 239, 246–47) make reference to repairs ordered in another Chamber of Alexander in Northampton.

⁴⁴ *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls, Henry III*, iv (1959), 18.

⁴⁵ Salter, *English and International*, p. 89.

⁴⁶ Lethaby, 'English Primitives IV: The Westminster and Chertsey Tiles', p. 138.

⁴⁷ Salter, *English and International*, pp. 88–89.

⁴⁸ See Thomas of Kent, *The Anglo-Norman Alexander*, ed. by Foster, I, 5974–86.

teenth-century England, the *Roman d'Alexandre* (interpolated into the manuscripts of the *Roman de toute chevalerie*), the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*, and the *Old French Prose Alexander*. If Henry commissioned literary and visual representations of English heroes of the past (particularly his uncle, Richard the Lion-heart), historical romances, the morality and didacticism of saints' lives, and the iconography of Fortune's Wheel, then he would have served as the perfect audience for contemporary Latin and vernacular accounts of Alexander as a conqueror who held the world in his hands but died in the blossoming of his life and lost everything.⁴⁹ However, Henry, like later kings attracted to the Alexander legend, surely favoured the mythical view of the conqueror presented in Bacon's *Secretum secretorum*. The notion therein that Alexander was privy to Aristotle's secrets of unfathomable conquest and that later readers could enjoy this resource to fight contemporary threats thrived in the thirteenth century, but the *Secretum* was not the only vehicle of such visions of grandeur.

The Revival of Jewish Legends of Alexander

For Jewish writers, unlike their early Christian counterparts, Alexander's victories in the Near East represented a matter of particular historical and political importance. Although the Roman historian Josephus Flavius included in his *Jewish Antiquities* the apocryphal story of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, he rightly emphasized the historical significance for the Jews of Macedonian conquest of Persia. In Josephus's telling, Alexander offers relief from the increasingly oppressive rule of the Persians, a fabrication that results in the presentation of 'the wicked and failing' Persian tenure and 'the righteous and successful' one of the Macedonians.⁵⁰ In the anecdote of the *Antiquities* most known to medieval readers, the Jews initially refuse to transfer their support from Darius to Alexander until God instructs Jaddus, the high priest of Jerusalem, to meet the conqueror in ceremonial dress, and only upon that encounter is it revealed that God had also advised Alexander in a dream to spare Jaddus and his people.⁵¹ After the Jews reveal the prophecy in the book of Daniel to the

⁴⁹ The seminal guide to the king's artistic tastes remains Borenus, 'The Cycle of Images in the Palaces and Castles of Henry III'; see also Tristram, *English Medieval Wall Painting*, pp. 528ff, and for a more in-depth study, Binski, *The Painted Chamber at Westminster*; and Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets*.

⁵⁰ Cohen, 'Alexander the Great and Jaddus the High Priest', p. 62.

⁵¹ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. by Marcus, vi (1937), 11. 8. 2–7.

Macedonian, Alexander joins the priests in sacrifice to their God and grants them a number of ancestral rights as a reward. The narrative presents, however, more than the sense of surprise at Alexander's generosity. As Arnaldo Momigliano has argued, Josephus alters the tone of the book of Daniel and its vision of successive empires in order to remove 'all that in the original is pointedly anti-Greek or anti-Macedonian'.⁵² The point of the visit to Jerusalem is, in essence, a peace treaty that benefits both parties: Alexander is thrilled to hear the prophecy that he will conquer the Persians, and the Jews are granted certain rights and the favour of a young emperor. As a benefactor for the Jews and the ruler destined to replace Darius III, Alexander is portrayed in a fashion that seemed quite favourable to medieval writers. Josephus even relates, albeit with a certain incredulity, how God parted the Pamphylian Sea so that Alexander might march on Persia.⁵³ This conception of him exercised considerable influence on both Latin and vernacular narratives of the twelfth and thirteenth century, in particular, as Jewish legends and their apocryphal episodes of Alexander's career gained a wider readership in Latin Christendom.⁵⁴

Josephus's writing on the conqueror gained a renewed authority in the Middle Ages via Peter Comestor's twelfth-century *Historia scholastica*, which became a successful vehicle for this new conception of Alexander. The two episodes that Peter chose were well suited to his 'comprehensive assembly of apocryphal and legendary elements',⁵⁵ and his version of Alexander is not an affront to God, as such a Christian historiographer as Orosius had argued, but a warrior-king who receives dream visions from him, sacrifices to him, and enjoys his divine assistance. Peter's first story recounts, for example, Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, where he explains to his men that he saw the Jewish God in a dream vision, and 'dumque mecum cogitarem utrum Asiam possem obtinere, jussit me confidere: nam ipse exercitum meum perduceret, et Persarum mihi traderet principatum' ('When I was thinking whether or not I would be able to conquer Asia, he ordered me to be confident, for he would lead my army there and give the Persian kingdom over to me').⁵⁶ In Peter's second Alexander episode, which

⁵² Momigliano, 'Flavius Josephus and Alexander's Visit to Jerusalem', p. 446.

⁵³ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. by Marcus, VI (1930), 2. 347.

⁵⁴ For a survey of Jewish legends of Alexander, see Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. by Marcus, VI, (1937), 512–32, and Stoneman, 'Jewish Traditions on Alexander the Great'.

⁵⁵ Morey, 'Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase', p. 6.

⁵⁶ Peter Comestor, *Historia scholastica*, ed. by Migne, col. 1497. Cf. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. by Marcus, VI (1930), 11. 333–35.

relates the enclosing of the Ten Tribes of Israel (replaced by Gog and Magog in other versions),⁵⁷ the conqueror encounters in the Caspian Gates, between the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian Sea, the sons of ten enclosed tribes, who ask him to release their people. When he hears that they openly rebelled against the God of Israel, however, Alexander decides to enclose them even more securely.⁵⁸ To achieve this, he tries to seal the mountain paths with bitumen, but when this fails he prays to God for assistance, and the Caspian crags straightaway move themselves to surround the tribes.⁵⁹ For his part, Peter put a familiar spin on the story, so that Alexander's pagan background was admissible under God's plan. He attributes, perhaps deliberately erroneously in order to assert an ancient authority, the solution of the problem to Josephus himself: 'Et, ut ait Josephus, Deus quid factururus est pro fidelibus suis, si tantum fecit pro infideli?' ('As Josephus asked, "What would God do for his faithful, if He did so much for an infidel?").⁶⁰ This thought attributes the Jerusalem and Ten Tribes episodes squarely to God's will, as if He had given Alexander His blessing to conquer Persia, and it serves, of course, to sanctify the Macedonian's remarkable success in the East.

Roger Bacon's contemporary, the St Albans chronicler and illustrator Matthew Paris, promoted the same model of divinely sanctioned kingship based on the Jewish legend of Alexander. In Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 26, a holograph copy of the *Chronica maiora*, he presents, for example, an ideal-

⁵⁷ Peter found this episode not in Josephus Flavius, but in the *Vitae prophetarum* of the writer known as Pseudo-Epiphanius. For a detailed survey of the evolution of the Alexander and Gog and Magog legend, see Anderson, *Alexander's Gate*. This story captured another of the iconic moments of Alexander in the Middle Ages, and in England it became an accepted historical and even geographical fact and a common episode in Latin and vernacular tales. In the opening words to Matthew Paris's itinerary to Jerusalem, *Itinéraires à Jérusalem*, ed. by Michelant and Raynaud, p. 125, for example, *Jérusalem et descriptions de la terre* he associates the Caspian Mountains as the place where Alexander enclosed Gog and Magog.

⁵⁸ Peter Comestor, *Historia scholastica*, ed. by Migne, col. 1498: 'Cumque [Alexander] quaesisset causam captivitatis, accepit eos recessisse aperte a Deo Israel' ('When Alexander sought the cause of their captivity, he learned that they had openly withdrawn themselves from the God of Israel').

⁵⁹ Peter Comestor, *Historia scholastica*, ed. by Migne, col. 1498: 'videns laborem humanum non sufficere, oravit Deum Israel, ut opus illud compleret' ('seeing that human effort would not suffice, Alexander prayed to the God of Israel that He complete the work for him'). In other versions, especially those which associate the enclosed peoples with Gog and Magog, the prisoners will be freed only by the Antichrist, and the event will initiate Armageddon.

⁶⁰ Peter Comestor, *Historia scholastica*, ed. by Migne, col. 1498.

ized Alexander through both textual and visual conceits,⁶¹ and his portrait of the conqueror conveys the conqueror's elevated status in Bacon's text. No longer condemnable because of his belligerence, Alexander is, in Matthew's telling, a divinely ordained protector from Eastern foes. The two striking features of this drawing, the *orbis terrarum* in his left hand and the beasts beneath his feet, have led to the argument that this Alexander represents a 'Christlike model ruler', based upon the predominant image of Psalm 90 (91), a song of divine protection in the shadow of the Lord and Christian *calcatio* — 'super aspidem et basiliscum calcabis conculcabis leonem et draconem' ('You will walk upon the asp and the basilisk, and you will trample underfoot the lion and the dragon').⁶² This psalm is one of faith in God and His divine protection of the righteous man who resides 'in abscondito Excelsi' ('in the shelter of the Most High') and will find refuge from the dangers of the world, and how through His defence, such a man will overcome the forces of evil (i.e., trample the beasts). From the early Middle Ages onward, the passage inspired frequent icons of *Christus triumphans*, or Christ pinning the beasts underfoot, variously interpreted as His victory over nameless evils, over Satan, and even both Satan and the Antichrist.⁶³ If Matthew had such a reference in mind, there are two possible interpretations of his portrait of Alexander: either he intended his subject as the faithful man protected by God and allowed to keep evil at bay from his person (dependant on the context of Psalm 91) or his Alexander is an idealized ruler who mimics Christ's act of conquering Satan's forces (dependant on medieval iconography of Christ Himself).⁶⁴

⁶¹ Although the chronicle that Matthew continues, Roger of Wendover's *Flores historiarum* relies on Justin and Orosius for its section on Macedonian history (perhaps a sign of digesting the *St Albans Compilation*), his interest in Alexander as an emotionally stable, even noble conqueror is more consistent with the *Secretum secretorum* than with the compendium produced at his own monastery.

⁶² Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 138; Psalm 91. 13 (Douay-Rheims).

⁶³ As Barasch, *The Language of Art*, p. 239 argues, the image evolved from Roman portraits of triumphant emperors and their slain enemies underfoot. The Christian translation of this image originated in the East and inspired various interpretations; see Hilmo, *Medieval Images, Icons, and Illustrated English Literary Texts*, p. 37.

⁶⁴ However, Matthew may have had in mind the politics of imaging his own ruler when he depicted Alexander in Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 26. In his lifetime, in fact, a key iconographical element had been added to portraits of English authority, the placement of the Plantagenet leopards at Henry's feet, and this early innovation on his first Great Seal raises an intriguing possibility. They had appeared on Plantagenet heraldry for generations, but no king before Henry III had transferred the animals from the coat of arms to the base of the throne. In fact, he so liked the idea of the leopards symbolically supporting his kingship that he commis-



Figure 7.
'Alexander the Great upon the Beasts',
Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll.,
MS 26, fol. 12'. Thirteenth century.
Reproduced with permission of the
Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi
College, Cambridge

The surest piece of evidence for the latter is Matthew's own drawing of Christ treading upon similar beasts in the historical miscellany of BL, MS Cotton Julius D. vii,⁶⁵ yet Matthew refers to Alexander's stance against evil in

sioned at least two novel representations of them, that on his seals from 1219 onward (used by every Plantagenet king thereafter) and a bronze pair to sit beside his throne in Westminster in 1245. See Shenton, 'Edward III and the Symbol of the Leopard', p. 74.

⁶⁵ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 139, reproduces this drawing. Considerable precedent existed for this image in manuscripts of English origin; see, e.g., Cambridge, CUL, MS Ff. 1. 23, fol. 195f, in Ohlgren, *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Illuminated Manuscripts*, cat. 185.

Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 26 itself, in which he twice mentions the Jewish apocryphal legend of Alexander subduing Gog and Magog. In a brief passage entitled 'De Antichristo' ('On the Antichrist'), he first reports the well-known prophecy of the Roman Tiburtine Sibyl, who predicted Constantine's defeat of paganism and the subsequent counter-attack of the Antichrist. Although the archangel Michael would slay this enemy, a great and bloody battle between good and evil would be waged, and the Sibyl states that 'et tunc exsurgent ab Aquilone spurcissimae gentes quas Alexander inclusit, Gog et Magog' ('in that time will rise up from the East the foulest races of Gog and Magog, whom Alexander enclosed').⁶⁶ This passing reference alludes to a popular, ancient Jewish tradition of associating 'Gog and Magog' with races inimical to the Jews but imprisoned by Alexander for the protection of his allies. These latter peoples were often conflated with the story of the so-called 'Ten Tribes' of Jewish exiles whom Alexander was said to have enclosed near the Caspian Sea in fulfilment of God's will. As George Cary notes of Gog and Magog (and applicable to the Ten Tribes as well), they 'were always identified with the peoples who presented the worst contemporary menace',⁶⁷ and so when Matthew writes of the encroaching Tartars who threaten Christendom in the continuation of Roger of Wendover's chronicle, he recalls the anecdote of Alexander:

Creduntur isti Tartari, quorum memoria est detestabilis, fuisse de decem tribubus, qui abierunt, relicta lege Mosaica, post vitulos aureos; quos etiam Alexander Macedo primo conatus est includere in praeruptis montibus Caspiorum molaribus bituminatis. Quod opus cum videret humanos labores excedere, invocavit auxilium Dei Israel; et coierunt cacumina montium adinvicem, et factus est locus inaccessibilis et immeabilis. Super quem locum dicit Iosephus 'Quanta faciet Deus pro fidei, qui tantum fecit pro infidei?.'

These Tartars, whom I find abominable to call to mind, are believed to have come from the Ten Tribes, who broke away from Moses and his law after the incident of the golden calf, and whom Alexander of Macedon first tried to enclose in the crags of the Caspian Mountains with blocks of bitumen. When he saw that this task exceeded human strength, he called upon the God of Israel for assistance, and the mountaintops joined together in turn, and the place was rendered inaccessible and impassable. Josephus [Flavius] asked of this, 'How much will God do for a man who put his faith in him, if he did so much for an infidel?'.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Matthew of Paris, *Chronica majora*, ed. by Luard, I, 50.

⁶⁷ Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, p. 130.

⁶⁸ Matthew of Paris, *Chronica majora*, ed. by Luard, IV (1877), 77–78. This is Matthew's original history, beyond what Roger had penned in his lifetime.

Here Matthew is undoubtedly informed by Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica*, wherein, as discussed above, many of Alexander's more heroic acts (such as this enclosure) performed for the Jews and even via the Jewish God appear. Like Peter, Matthew seems intent on casting Alexander as a potent vehicle for the protection of God's people, but unlike the earlier historiographer, he extends this anecdote to the threats of his own time. The Ten Tribes of ancient history have spawned the Tartars of contemporary fear, and such an association evidently insinuates — particularly with the concluding question in the passage — Matthew's faith that if God allowed the pagan Alexander to accomplish such a feat, then a Christian leader can surely perform the same on the frontlines of Eastern Europe.⁶⁹

Alexander and the Fourteenth-Century Plantagenets

It was just such a suggestion of divinely sanctioned conquest abroad that attracted the Plantagenet kings to Alexander. Shortly after Edward I's death in 1307, for example, an anonymous admirer wrote a eulogy that compared Edward favourably to Alexander the Great. The address is a marvellous testimony both to the textual presence of Alexander at the turn of the fourteenth century and his usefulness for measuring the deeds of contemporary monarchs. The opening words contextualize the ancient ruler within one Jewish account, 1 Maccabees, while inviting the audience to recall the larger tradition of writing and re-writing the legacy of the ancient ruler:

Alexander reigned for twelve years and died. Although this text, which is from the first book of Maccabees chapter 1 (8), was said in connection with (*in persona*) Alexander the Great, the king of the Greeks, we may nevertheless conveniently take it for our purpose as being said about our most illustrious lord Edward king of the English, because truly, if his deeds and works were set down in writing (*scriptis*) as the deeds and works of Alexander were recorded in books, Edward's works would appear no less, indeed perhaps more, worthy of praise and splendid than the works and deeds of Alexander [...]. For if Alexander the Great, king of the Greeks, ruled in the equity of justice, in the power of warring down his enemies, and in energy and wisdom of mind, as the books written about him make clear, we may say with justice that this most illustrious and holy king [Edward] ruled as Alexander did with respect to these three things.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Matthew's association of the Tartars with Gog and Magog follows an established medieval tradition of demonizing the Mongol threat to Western Europe; see, e.g., Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization*, pp. 149–151.

⁷⁰ D'Avray, *Death and the Prince*, p. 71, who edits and translates the sermon in Roma, Bibl.

These three points of comparison — that both kings treated their subjects justly and slew tyrants, defeated their enemies, and ruled energetically — unmistakably echo the Maccabean, and generally the Jewish, portrait of Alexander, and although the eulogizer hints at a broad knowledge of written accounts of Alexander, his decision to employ the Maccabean account as a gauge of the ancient ruler's, and by extension, Edward's, success is telling indeed.⁷¹ In his argument, if Alexander was revered for the acts of kingship and conquest related in the biblical account, then Edward should be admired for his own achievements as well. However, the opening lines to 1 Maccabees seem oddly disquieting for a supposedly heroic view of the king, with the details that Alexander 'killed the kings of the earth', 'took up the spoils of a multitude of races', and left a world that 'stood silent under his gaze'.⁷²

To be sure, this is an account of Alexander wholly from the Jewish perspective, and so it begins with his conquest of the Persians and concludes with the evils induced not by Alexander but by his successors, namely Antiochus, whose narrative follows that of Alexander and who was a reviled persecutor of the Jews. If one removes the bookends, so to speak, of this passage — his conquest of Persia and the outright villainy of his successors — a rather uneasy portrait of martial aggression remains, similar to the epitaphs discussed in the previous chapter. For Edward's eulogizer, it seems that this aggression against the enemies of Alexander's nation was justified, for he will go on to compare the English king to Judas Maccabeus himself, who, in the manner of a lion, 'went after evil men, and [...] burnt with flames those who were disturbing his people'.⁷³ The association would have been especially pleasing to Edward, who commissioned not only a picture cycle of that particular hero in the Painted Chamber in the royal palace at Westminster but also portraits of the individual historical figures, including Alexander, of the Maccabean books.⁷⁴ Clearly, then, Alexander was received among good company of kings, warriors, and heroes who protected their own and struck down their enemies, and both Edward and those who wished to pay him homage found a model of kingship in the stories and images of Antiquity's most famed conqueror.

Angelica, MS 158, fols 156^{vb}–57^{rb}.

⁷¹ D'Avray, *Death and the Prince*, pp. 71–73, explains the three points in detail.

⁷² 1 Maccabees 1. 1–10.

⁷³ D'Avray, *Death and the Prince*, p. 72.

⁷⁴ See Binski, *The Painted Chamber at Westminster*, pp. 93–103; Tudor-Craig, 'The Painted Chamber at Westminster'; and Prestwich, *Edward I*, p. 119.

However, the eulogizer also intended his audience to recall the brief concluding statement to the ancient ruler's life in 1 Maccabees: 'Alexander ruled for twelve years and died'. Over two hundred years earlier in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, the earliest surviving Anglo-Latin epitaph for Alexander concluded with a similar statement from Orosius that for twelve years Alexander held the world trembling under his sword, and then he was poisoned by one of his own men. Here, the redactor uses Orosius's condemnation to inculcate Alexander, so that this ruler who died in the flower of his reign seemingly did so because of the terror he wrought upon the world. In the eulogy for Edward, the sudden end to Alexander's reign serves not necessarily as a warning against pride and ambition but rather as a moral caveat on how suddenly and unexpectedly a king's reign can come to an end. Still, in the eulogizer's mind, one should take comfort in Edward's death, for he both left 'good heirs from his seed and a good first-born son who should rule in his place' (a confidence that the king himself likely did not share) and enjoyed the eternal life of a Christian.⁷⁵ Alexander, of course, was denied the first by his warring successors, who killed his son and widow, and the second by his place in pagan history.

In this manner, the passage demonstrates an awareness of Alexander's sudden demise, but its author cannot help but recall as well the ruler's victories over his enemies and fighting spirit ('animi industria'), the fundamental means of comparison with Edward's reign. To imitate and even to surpass in the minds of others this Alexander required a romance sensibility. Beryl Smalley cites, for example, another eulogy for Edward that recalls Alexander, as the author compares what he considers two grand eras of conquest: Alexander's victories over the Medes, Persians, and the peoples of the East and Edward's successful campaigns in Gascony, Wales, and Scotland.⁷⁶ In neglecting the warnings of Alexander's reign that loom as omens of self-destruction in the Roman texts favoured by twelfth-century monasticism, this conception of Alexander as a mighty ruler with a spectacular career and a divine agent against evil, regardless of his woeful death and the dismemberment of his empire, provided an ideal version of the conqueror for royal audiences.

Aligned with this heroic Alexander, the *Secretum* had moved further away from the moral concerns of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the fourteenth century and remained an influential political tract by similarly promoting the conqueror as a political model. In 1326 or 1327, Walter de Milemete gave the young

⁷⁵ D'Avray, *Death and the Prince*, p. 73.

⁷⁶ Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity*, p. 9.

Prince of Wales (before he became Edward III), two versions of the *Secretum*, the standard one that had widely circulated since Bacon's translation and one that Ralph Hanna describes as a 'précis' for a younger reader, the *De nobilitatibus, sapienciis et prudenciis*.⁷⁷ Although the impetus behind this second version remained the hope that 'Edward [would] eventually be an appropriate successor to Alexander',⁷⁸ Walter reveals no influence of Aristotle's *Ethics*.⁷⁹ Rather than focusing on the causes of tyrannical vices, the *De nobilitatibus* applies its four primary moral virtues (justice, prudence, courage, and temperance) to the understanding and application of the aspects of successful kingship and conquest:

the conquering lord's pleasing speech, his honourable patience, his toleration [...] of [his defeated enemies'] feelings to some extent, together with the gifts and pleasing promises given them by the lord, as far as the quality and condition of his person are concerned, soothe the instinct of their souls and ardently attract to the conquering king the emotions and love of the people of a foreign land. For thus had King Alexander of Macedon once acted, after having subjugated the Persians to him, as I find written in the counsel of the wise philosopher Aristotle given to him. And thereafter he acquired many lands through the strength and power of the Persians.⁸⁰

Once the fundamental anxiety of Roman texts copied in twelfth-century monastic scriptoria, Alexander's orientalism here becomes what many in the sixteenth century believed the conqueror himself desired, namely an admirable means of political and cultural unification.

Near the end of the fourteenth century, an anonymous *speculum* based in part on the *Secretum*, the *De quadripartita regis specie*, similarly defines the cardinal virtues as wisdom, prudence, and justice, the worst vices as disobedience, foolishness, and imprudence, and the role of a king to protect his people against lawbreakers and agents of disorder.⁸¹ While John of Salisbury saw the poten-

⁷⁷ Hanna, *London Literature, 1300–1380*, pp. 116–17. Michael, 'A Manuscript Wedding Gift from Philippa of Hainault', discusses another political tract that Edward received as a wedding gift, BnF, MS fr. 571. Besides a French translation of the *Secretum secretorum*, the manuscript also features a political and ethical discourse by Brunetto Latini. This work draws, too, from the *Nicomachean Ethics* in presenting what Brunetto Latini, *Li Livres dou Tresor*, ed. by Baldwin and Barrette, p. xix, describes as a book about 'learning to control one's self, one's household and the body politic'.

⁷⁸ Hanna, *London Literature, 1300–1380*, p. 117.

⁷⁹ *Political Thought in Early Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. and trans. by Nederman, p. 20.

⁸⁰ *Political Thought in Early Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. and trans. by Nederman, p. 50.

⁸¹ *Four English Political Tracts*, ed. by Genet, p. 35. See p. 39: 'enim convenit regie maiestati populum regimini eius commissum, divites et egerios, sub iniuncione legum ita defendere quod

tial for tyranny in any man of power whose heart was set on evil, these later manifestations of the *Secretum* reveal the disparity after two centuries of appropriating Aristotle and Alexander for kingly education.⁸² The older belief that education offered a means of eradicating the conqueror's baser qualities was now *passé*, and in many fourteenth-century guidebooks there is nothing from which to save Alexander, because their authors do not consider him in terms of degradation and vice. In Walter de Milemete's *De nobilitatibus*, Alexander is beloved by the Persians, and according to the *De quadripartita regis specie*, Aristotle taught Alexander how to rule his people by laws and statutes; in both versions, Alexander appears as the popular, harmonizing ruler of romance rather than the corrupted tyrant of Roman histories and John of Salisbury and Gerald of Wales's earlier guidebooks to moral behaviour. The warnings of the *Nicomachean Ethics* no longer apply to Alexander, then, if one accepts him as this glorified conqueror of the romance sensibility that Edward III, who maintained an interest in the pageantry and glory of the Nine Worthies and other romance cycles later in life, clearly possessed.⁸³

The *Secretum secretorum*, with any anxieties over Alexander's political and personal mistakes now whitewashed and his successful education prominently advertised instead, was not the only guidebook that Edward received in the early 1330s. Another writer, William of Pagula, considered the task of morally and politically guiding a young ruler as a serious and lamentably necessary matter, and producing his *Speculum regis Edwardi III* amidst 'the Plantagenet obsession with warfare', he focused much of his attention on the policy of purveyance, Edward's means of requisitioning goods for royal use.⁸⁴ Such financial abuse conflicted with what William regards as the economic aspect of proper governance, wherein 'the king should curb his expenditures [...] pay his debts, keep closer watch over his officials, and use his surplus income to

nullus subditorum temerarie alium contra leges et statuta invadere presumat' ('indeed it befits the royal majesty to defend the people, rich and poor, committed to his rule under a body of laws, so that none of his subjects thoughtlessly presume to attack each other against [the king's] laws and statutes').

⁸² Nederman and Campbell, 'Priests, Kings, and Tyrants', p. 582.

⁸³ As assessed by Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, pp. 57–75, Edward's library was well stocked with Arthurian, Trojan, and Nine Worthies romances, and his tournaments exhibited the influence of such tales. Staniland, 'Court Style, Painters, and the Great Wardrobe', p. 243, cites that Edward once possessed at least one pillow 'stained' with the Alexander story.

⁸⁴ *Political Thought in Early Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. and trans. by Nederman, p. 64.

look after the poor and the infirm'.⁸⁵ War, particularly incessant war, drains the royal coffers and puts an undue financial burden on the public, so that 'the Edwards through this practice were exercising an Alexandrine tyranny' that William condemns.⁸⁶ Rather than celebrating Alexander's military glory — the same glory that had attracted Edward's great-grandfather and grandfather — William takes an unusual stance against the conqueror in his day. He relies only on the anecdote of the philosophers who visit Alexander's tomb and dismiss his earthly accomplishments to argue that such glory means nothing for a king's legacy if his public suffered to attain it.⁸⁷ Although William's opinion of the conqueror was an increasingly rare one in the 1330s, he anticipated the transition both in Alexander's reputation and in the efficacy of educating such an ambitious man that would accompany the close of the fourteenth century and another troubled reign.

⁸⁵ *Political Thought in Early Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. and trans. by Nederman, p. 71.

⁸⁶ Hanna, *London Literature, 1300–1380*, p. 268.

⁸⁷ See *Political Thought in Early Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. and trans. by Nederman, pp. 121–22.

‘MORAL’ GOWER AND THE REJECTION OF ALEXANDER

As more writers believed that Alexander had failed to adhere to Aristotle’s lessons and indeed had utterly failed to heed the philosopher’s warnings against tyrannical behaviour, the *Secretum secretorum* came to represent a fundamental paradox in Alexander’s reception in the “Mirror-for-Princes” genre’, which had long promoted the notion of a successful teacher and his exceptionally successful student, who applied what he learned to build a wondrous empire and maintain an ideal rule. In fourteenth-century England, no writer understood the disparity between this fabricated version of an Alexander who owed his extraordinary success to following the precepts of Aristotle’s teaching and the historical one plagued by vices and an inability to sustain his empire with an orderly succession — so identified as ‘true history’ by the *Parva recapitulatio* two hundred years earlier — better than John Gower. Although his treatment of the ancient figure has often been downplayed as contradictory and fickle (rather in the manner of a cataloguer incorporating all that he could find on the subject), by the end of his career Gower possessed an extensive knowledge of the various traditions of Alexander literature in circulation and clearly rejected Alexander as one of history’s imitable models of kingship.¹ The

¹ Debate remains over Gower’s attitudes towards Alexander. Although Grady, ‘The Lancastrian Gower’, thinks Gower incapable of condemning the Macedonian, Strohm, *Hochon’s Arrow*, and Michael Livingston, preface to *In Praise of Peace*, in Gower, *The Minor Latin Works*, ed. by Yeager, pp. 91–92, call proper attention to the poet’s disapproval of a belligerent, tyrannical Alexander.

conqueror and his degradation from a promising young warrior-king to an irrational tyrant provided Gower with a career's worth of reflection, and with each of his three major works, he scrutinized the causes and ramification of this fall.

This conception of Alexander stemmed from some of the concerns dearest to 'moral Gower', as Chaucer dubbed him.² By the time Gower wrote *Confessio amantis*, for example, he was assertive and articulate in his belief that human reason had to conquer human will and that, particularly relevant to kings, 'the ethical health of the individual' was absolutely necessary for 'the well-being of the body politic'.³ In other words, Gower promotes a king's perfection of self-governance before being fit to govern others, but such perfection of 'Dei vicarius' ('God's deputy') relies on a proper and thorough education.⁴ Throughout his career, Gower clearly judged Alexander, history's most famous ruler instructed by history's most famous teacher, as a failure of both self-governance and adherence to moral education. As a result, he fashions from his considerable knowledge of Alexander an extended moral warning on bad kingship and one that echoed the warm reception in England of the Roman portrayal of the conqueror as a corruptible and ultimately corrupted tyrant whose will utterly vanquished his reason.⁵ This awareness of a degenerate Alexander aided Gower in developing not only his specific ideas of the Macedonian's career but also his general ideas of ethics, kingship and personal comportment, the very ideological concerns on which he built his poetic career. His understanding of Alexander's collapse and the dismemberment of his empire involved, however, a gradual process enacted over the course of his three major poetic works.

The Mirour de l'omme

In his earlier writings, Gower presents Alexander within the more simplistic terms of the allegory of Fortune's Wheel, especially as it pertained to the progression of historical eras. In his first major work and indictment of vice and corruption, the Anglo-Norman *Mirour de l'omme*, Gower appropriately fixes, for example, the Macedonian empire between Fortune's earlier favoured

² Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Benson, 5.1856.

³ Porter, 'Gower's Ethical Microcosm and Political Macrocosm', p. 135.

⁴ For the notion of the king as 'Dei vicarius', see Kobayashi, '*Principis Umbra*: Kingship, Justice, and Pity in John Gower'.

⁵ Yeager, 'Pax Poetica and the Pacifism of Gower and Chaucer', argues that Alexander, famous for incessant campaigning, simply did not fare well in Gower's scrutiny of unjust warfare.

power (the Persians) and her later one (the Romans). Just as Fortune had lifted the Persians over the Chaldeans, he writes, so she turned her favour thence to Alexander, who conquered the Persians in turn and enjoyed the tribute ('truage') of the entire world. Yet Alexander finds his life and his power to be brief, and as the wheel of Fortune turns again, Macedon suffers a collapse similar to those of preceding empires yet unique in its causation:

Huy luy fist Roys, et l'endemein
 L'enpuisonna, siq'au darrein
 Morust et ot sa sepulture:
 Ore est tourne s'onour en vein,
 Les Regnes sont sanz chevetein,
 Et la conquete en aventure [...]
 Les gentz du Roy par covoitise
 Començont guerre et grant debat,
 Chascuns volt estre potestat,
 Ce que l'un halce l'autre abat,
 Siq'au darrein par halte enprise
 La grande Rome ove ceaux combat
 Et les venquist, dont leur estat
 Fortune hosta de sa reprise.

One day he was king and the next he was poisoned, and then in the end he was dead and buried. Now his honour has passed in vain, his realms are without a leader, and his conquests are left to chance [...]. Led by covetousness, the people of the king began war and great strife. Each one wanted power, and when one raised his station, another brought it down. At last, by their noble enterprise, the Romans made war on them and conquered them, and so Fortune vanquished [the Macedonian] state as punishment.⁶

Gower's interest in human culpability is already evident, for although his Alexander, not yet vilified, falls victim to Fortune's whims, his survivors destroy themselves by ambition and greed. For Gower, these lesser men are not the heirs of Fortune's favour, for they toil ignobly between Alexander, to whom all the world paid tribute, and the Romans, whose 'heigh enprise' earns them their own, longer-standing empire. In the *Mirour de l'omme*, it is not the famous conqueror but his survivors who are led by vice and perpetuate evils in the world in their own quest for sovereignty. Although Alexander and the Romans represent the more well-known and powerful figures perched on Fortune's wheel,

⁶ *Mirour de l'omme*, in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, I, (1899), 22066–80.

the Macedonian successors provide the means of transmission: by their internal strife, they not only dismantle Alexander's empire but also lay the foundation for Roman *imperium*.

Two central ideas to which Gower would return lie in this passage, namely the conception of history in terms of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the four-tiered statue (representing the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians, the Macedonians/Greeks, and the Romans) that would begin the prologue to the *Confessio amantis* and the role of human behaviour and culpability as Fortune guided them from one period to another.⁷ Few men of Antiquity could, of course, lay claim to such an influence on history as Alexander, yet in the *Mirour de l'omme* Gower does not attribute this influence to any condemnable drive, like the covetousness that dictates his successors. In fact, Gower's only other reference to Alexander in his Anglo-Norman work involves, within a passage on 'charité', the conqueror's compassion for and honourable burial of Darius, slain by traitors.⁸ This represents, however, Alexander *before* the conquest of Persia and thus before his corruption by unfathomable success in the East. In the Roman attitudes circulating in England, as discussed in previous chapters, the death of Darius launched Alexander's agenda of orientalism and his resultant degeneracy. Behind him lay one mission accomplished — the conquest of Persia and the very mission that had, in fact, defined his early career — but before him lay luxuriousness, drunkenness, madness, and egregious pretensions of his divinity.

In returning to the subject of Macedon in subsequent works, Gower gradually expands his conception of Alexander to include both this basic dichotomy of his career before and after his victories in the East and Gower's own views on Fortune, so that the conqueror becomes culpable for the disintegration of his kingship and his empire alike. In short, Gower comes to assert explicitly — in the Senecan fashion that had gained momentum for two centuries — that the fall of a man is due in part to his own faults and errors, not merely the machinations wrought by Fortune. As he scrutinizes the individual as a man of inde-

⁷ The dream is described in the *Confessio amantis* in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), I. 2992–3039.

⁸ See *Mirour de l'omme*, in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, I (1899), 13011–17. Gower's version of this episode is not necessarily original, but it does maintain Alexander's highly emotive reaction: 'ainçois qant survient, | Et vist le corps q'estoit moerdry, | Pour la compassioun de luy | Tantost si tristes en devient | Qe du plorer ne s'en abstient, | Si fist au corps ce q'appartient | De sepulture' ('Once Alexander came upon the scene and saw the corpse of the murdered king, he became so sorrowful with compassion for him that he could not refrain from crying, and he ordered the body to be buried').

pendent action and reaction, he frequently presents Alexander as an example of criminality and of the danger that bad kingship inflicts on others. This broader understanding and appropriation of Antiquity's most predominant ruler soon matured in the composition of the *Vox clamantis*, a poem concerned with calamities and personal responsibility and one that Gower intriguingly announces as a study of how 'et non a fortuna talia inter homines contingunt enormia' ('not by mere fortune such terrible things happen among human beings').⁹

The Vox clamantis

In this, his 'exclamation' of the evils within Richard II's crumbling reign and his second sustained attack on moral depravity, much of Gower's attention to Alexander occurs in Book Six, his treatise on rulers who abuse justice and seek private profit rather than the well-being of their subjects. Four of the five references to the Macedonian are found here, a frequency that attests to just how useful Alexander had become to Gower's notions of kingship and (im)proper rule. Again, the allusions convey the poet's increasing belief that the conqueror fell victim both to the vicissitudes of Fortune and to his own passions, elements that were, in Gower's mind, both responsible for hastening a king's collapse. More specifically, the poet considers in this work that Alexander's collapse emanated from two primary shortcomings, his failure to heed his elite education and his failure to govern himself rationally and ethically. As Gower addresses Richard, he recalls this idea of an Alexander who became a servant to his own vices:

Doctor Alexandri Magni prauos sibi mores
Primitus edocuit, dum puer ipse fuit:
Rex puer hec didicit, que post dum dedidicisse
Temptauit, primus obstat abusus ei:
Vicit Alexander Darium simul et Babilonem,
Set nequit impressum vincere corde malum.

When Alexander was a boy, his first teacher [Leonides] instilled him with depravity, and when as a king he later tried to forget those things that he had learned as a boy, this initial impropriety prevented him from doing so. Alexander conquered Darius and Babylon alike, but he could not overcome the evil inherent in his heart.¹⁰

⁹ Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by Peck, I, 230.

¹⁰ *Vox clamantis*, in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, IV (1902), 6. 631–36.

Here Gower restates an ancient indictment against Alexander and joins a long Stoic tradition of undermining his achievements by identifying his innate vices, yet in this passage he also demonstrates a newfound appropriation of Alexander as a means of emphasizing his own pedagogical agenda.¹¹ He attributes at least part of the conqueror's failure to maintain his morals in the East to his first, degenerate teacher, and while Gower instructs Richard, in so many words, *not* to be like Alexander, the poet must know, too, that he must set a better example than did this Leonides.

Indeed, as Gower's portrayal of the Macedonian conqueror continues, he further underscores the folly and danger of following in Alexander's footsteps. Despite enjoying a reputation for chivalry and heroism and being associated with Hector and Julius Caesar as the ancient world's representatives among the Nine Worthies, Alexander was, all in all, a pagan king who fell from Fortune's favour. Simple lessons lay in this summary of history: a king should not trust, of course, in success and good fortune, but he must also possess a certain royal sensibility, an awareness that the annals of history are replete with rulers whose power and influence came and went. Neither Alexander nor anyone of Antiquity who built a reputation on warfare was a proper model for kingship, for a Christian ruler must reign over himself and his people by certain moral tenets. Issuing a warning against those wilful, martial kings, Gower insists on the trap sprung by Fortune, who 'audaces fortuna iuvans consummat in actum | Que sibi vult animus, et pociora dabit' ('helps the bold accomplish what they desire in their minds, and then she grants even more').¹² There is no satiating a bold ruler led by his wishes and inclinations to wage war on others, as the more he gains of glory and wealth, the more he is seduced by Fortune, until, like Alexander and the Macedonians, he collapses from her wheel.

While Gower has already begun in this sixth book of the *Vox clamantis* to reflect on Alexander's lack of self-control, he also raises a particularly dangerous aspect of this flaw that would fascinate him for the rest of his career. The

Gower, *The Major Latin Works*, trans. by Stockton, p. 234, cites this 'doctor' as Aristotle, but Leonides was known as Alexander's earlier teacher, and because of his disreputable behaviour, Philip replaced him with the famous philosopher.

¹¹ Blaming Leonides for Alexander's faults has a long literary tradition; see Fears, 'The Stoic View of the Career and Character of Alexander', pp. 114–15. Gower is not unaware of Alexander's most respected achievements and attributes in the *Vox clamantis*. At 2. 263, he references the conqueror's enclosure of the Ten Tribes, and at 6. 1279, he recognizes Alexander's liberality ('largus Alexander') in sharing booty with his men.

¹² *Vox clamantis*, in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, iv (1902), 6.969–70.

Macedonian, Gower knew, was but one of many conquerors who thought to seize the world for glory and wealth, and as he condemns in this book rulers who strive merely for profit ('lucrum'), he begins to promote Alexander as a man who not only undermined any hope of stoic and regal behaviour but also one who wrought a good deal of suffering on others because of his ambition. Unprovoked war becomes a key component in this book on justice, and Alexander's unswerving, militaristic stance surely makes it difficult for Gower to lament his premature death. He rather presents Alexander as a king who could not withstand the blows of Fortune and, even more pointedly, as a king whose expansive empire, built on unjust wars and the desire for personal gain, was for naught. In this respect, Alexander — like Julius Caesar, one of his peers in the Nine Worthies — offers a valuable exemplum for those who seek only profit, an antithesis to the justice that Gower promotes in this section of the book:

Magnus erat Cesar totoque potencior orbe,
Nunc quem nec mundus ceperat, vrna capit.
Sic et Alexander fortissimus ille Macedo
Clauditur angusto, pulvis et ossa, loco:
Maior erat magno mundo, modo nobile corpus
Exulis et victi vilis arena tegit.

Mighty Caesar was greater than this entire globe, and now an urn contains him, whom the world could not. So, too, is that mightiest Alexander of Macedon closed up — dust and bones — in a narrow space; he was greater than this vast world, and now a bit of sand covers the noble body of this exiled and conquered man.¹³

This moralizing epitaph for Alexander as a symbol of fleeting power and wealth was, by Gower's day, a common reflection on the temporality and futility of all that Alexander had achieved on earth in English treatments of the ancient conqueror.¹⁴

In Gower's use of the epitaph, he engages with a conception of Alexander to which he would return for several years more, one based on the notion that while rulers of the ancient world established their wealth and their empires (physical and political signifiers of their substantial power), history, especially a moral, Christian telling of it, is not obliged to remember them favourably. As he instructs Richard II on the reputation of past nobility, Gower recalls Richard's father, Edward the Black Prince, in more favourable and nostalgic terms.

¹³ *Vox clamantis*, in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, iv (1902), 6. 1107–12.

¹⁴ See Chapter 3, pp. 104–09..

Recalling the promise of Edward, Gower eulogizes a sort of *pax Anglicana*, a hopeful, even pastoral, time brought about by a peaceful state and careful, judicious consideration of war:

Terra quieta fuit sub tali principe magno,
Non terret gladius quos tegit illa manus:
Sub ficu, sub vite sua, sub fronde, sub umbra,
Quisque manet tutus nobilis ense ducis:
Sic robusta sua virtus plus surgit in altum,
Plus viget hoste suo, plus probitatis habet.

The land was still under such a great prince, and no sword threatened those protected by his hand. Under the fig tree, its switches, its leaves, and its shade, everyone remained safe under the sword of that noble leader, and the more the prince's hardy strength surged up on high, the more he flourished in defeating his enemies, and the more his esteem increased.¹⁵

Edward surely would have appreciated a writer's ability to dictate a king's stature. In his will he left instructions for a moralistic passage to serve as his epitaph, in which a philosopher reads on a tombstone the lingering words of the dead: 'Sum quod eris' ('I am what you will become'), the corpse warns, 'quod es ipse fui, derisor amarae | Mortis, dum licuit pace iuvante frui' ('and what you are I once was, a man scornful of bitter death while he was allowed to enjoy blissful peace').¹⁶ The corpse was none other than Alexander, to whom Edward would later be compared but who, in this instance, served as a reminder of mortality and the shifting perspectives of one's legacy.¹⁷ Again, the tone that informs this epitaph extends from the moralizing view that Alexander, like so many pagan rulers of Antiquity, lost everything in a moment's notice, and although he achieved a temporary glory and empire, it could not compare with the heavenly realm and does not merit lasting admiration. As Augustine, in cit-

¹⁵ *Vox clamantis*, in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, iv (1902), 6. 961–66.

¹⁶ Tyson, 'The Epitaph of Edward the Black Prince', p. 99. Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, p. 51, ascribes the choice to Edward's 'unusual degree of literary discrimination'.

¹⁷ Walsingham, *Chronicon Angliae*, ed. by Thompson, p. 91, writes 'ut dicitur de magno Alexandro, nullam gentem adiit quam non vicit, nullam civitatem obsedit quam non cepit' ('as it said of Alexander the Great, [Edward] did not encounter any people whom he did not conquer, and he did not besiege any city that he did not capture'). In the shorter version of his chronicle, Walsingham, *Chronica maiora*, trans. by Preest, p. 27, he recalls another ancient figure whose career was cut short: 'While he was alive and safe, all nations, both Christian and pagan, had gone in deep dread of his good fortune in war, just as though he was a second Hector'.

ing the anecdote of Alexander and the pirate, asks of such empires built on warfare, 'Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies?'.¹⁸ The Macedonian empire was, according to these judgments, both transient and unlawful, and the fundamental divide between Christian and pagan history prevents Alexander from serving as a model of kingship, a stance that Augustine's student Orosius so vociferously established, but it also undermines Alexander's suitability as a political paradigm.

Gower, too, appropriated this view, and in his telling a ruler like Alexander could never offer such a halcyon era as that attributed to Edward, for the conqueror failed to heed his education, was unable to curb his most destructive proclivities, and forged an empire on incessant war. He never ceased his campaigns, and he certainly could not protect his empire from imminent dissolution. Moreover, of course, Alexander had been taught right from wrong, but he could not eradicate the inherent vices from his heart, and Gower's conception of history could justifiably grant him a second-rate reception. As he warns Richard, Hector and Alexander — noble warriors as they were — remained reliant on the limitations, biases, and vagaries of a written record, yet if the young Richard sought to exceed his father, he would be called an even greater king than these ancient examples, and 'totaque vox clamet laudis honore tue' ('every voice would shout out to honour and praise you').¹⁹ A tricky protasis indeed.

The concern that he, like Aristotle, would fail in his task of instruction must have been frequent in Gower's mind. Although he began the *Vox clamantis* in 1377, just as the ten year-old Richard ascended the throne, he defined and re-defined the nature of this work throughout his career. Several manuscripts of both the *Vox clamantis* and the *Confessio amantis* end with Latin colophons, in which Gower explains the aims and motivation behind each of his three major works, and just as he thrice revised the last of these works, so he thrice revised its colophons. In each of his abstracts of the *Vox clamantis*, the degree to which

¹⁸ Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. by Dods, 4. 4.

¹⁹ *Vox clamantis*, in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, IV (1902), 6. 978. See also 6. 975–77: 'Hector, Alexander, fuerant dum nobiliores, | Sistere disparibus non potuere rotis: | Acta patris vince, maiorque vocaberis illo' ('Hector and Alexander, although they were quite celebrated, were unable to stand firm on imbalanced wheels: surpass your father's deed, and you'll be hailed as greater than he was'). Although Gower, *The Major Latin Works*, trans. by Stockton, p. 242, argues that this passage plays on the Ovidian notion of elegy as metrically and aurally imbalanced ('imparibus rotis'), the association of these *rotae* as the *rotae Fortunae*, the wheel of Fortune that had dictated Gower's assessment of the Macedonian empire earlier in the *Vox clamantis*, seems likely.

Gower distances himself from and condemns Richard, his own kingly pupil, is striking. The three versions read as follows:

Secundus enim liber, sermone Latino versibus exametri et pentametri compositus, tractat super illo mirabili euentu qui in Anglica tempore domini Regis Ricardi secundi anno regni sui quarto contigit, quando seruiles rustici impetuose contra nobiles et ingenuos regni insurrexerunt. Innocenciam tamen dicti domini Regis tunc minoris etatis causa inde excusabilem pronuncians, culpas aliunde, ex quibus et non a fortuna talia inter homines contingunt enormia, euidencius declarat. Titulusque voluminis huius, cuius ordo vii continet paginas, Vox Clamantis nominatur.

The second book, composed in Latin hexameter and pentameter verses, discourses about that astonishing event that occurred in England in the time of the lord King Richard II, in the fourth year of his reign, when rustic bondsmen impetuously rebelled against the nobles and magnates of the kingdom. Noting the excusable innocence, however, of the said lord king then on the grounds that he was underage, it declares the blame for these things to fall more clearly elsewhere, from which, and not by mere fortune, such terrible things happen among human beings. And the title of this volume, whose structure contains eight pieces of writing, is named the *Vox Clamantis*.

Secundus liber versibus exametri et pentametre sermone latino componitur. Tractat de variis infortuniis tempore Regis Ricardi secundi in Anglia multipliciter contingentibus, vbi pro statu regni compositor deuocius exorat. Nomenque voluminis huius, quod in septem diuiditur partes, Vox Clamantis intitulatur.

The second book is composed in the Latin language in hexameter and pentameter. It treats about the various misfortunes occurring in England in the time of King Richard II, where the maker devoutly prays on behalf of the realm's condition. And the name of this book, which is divided into seven parts, is entitled *Vox Clamantis*.

Secundus enim liber sermone latino metrico compositus tractat de variis infortuniis tempore Regis Ricardi Secundi in Anglia contingentibus. Vnde non solum regni proceres et communes tormenta passi sunt, set et ipse crudelissimus rex suis ex demeritis ab alto corruens in foueam quam fecit finaliter proiectus est. Nomenque voluminis huius Vox Clamantis intitulatur.

The second book, composed metrically in Latin, discourses about the various misfortunes occurring in England in the time of King Richard II. Wherefore not only the nobility of the kingdom and the commons suffered torments, but even the most unfit king himself, because of his own shortcomings rushing down from on high, was thrown into the pit that he had made; and this volume is entitled the *Vox Clamantis*.²⁰

²⁰ Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by Peck, I, 230–33.

Some of Gower's most persistent anxieties occur in these colophons, including the uneasy assessment of historical milieux, human error, and the social and moral responsibilities of kings, and he identifies from his unique vantage point the failures in each of these concerns. Richard had been his royal pupil, and for all of the encouragement in the *Vox clamantis* to adhere to a plan of noble behaviour and policy, Gower must write in the third colophon, just as he commented on Alexander's inherent malice ('impressum corde malum') and fall from Fortune's grace, that 'the most unfit king [Richard]' fell 'suis ex demeritis' ('because of his own shortcomings') from his place of prominence into a pit. Gower had earlier stated that terrible things happen not by Fortune alone; now, having witnessed Richard's failed kingship, he forthrightly blames his one-time student for his collapse, just as he blames Alexander for his own fall.

Alexander and Kingly Education in the Confessio amantis

In the 1380s, such concerns for his nation led Gower to pen his third major work, the *Confessio amantis*, and this, too, became an evolving textual record of the poet's anxieties over Richard.²¹ While he dedicated the first recension as a 'bok for king Richardes sake', complete with an assurance of his own devotion to the monarch and a prayer for his long reign, the second version was re-written as a 'bok for Engelondes sake', now epitomized by the opening lament that 'Men se the world on every syde | In sondry wyse so diversified, | That it welnyh stant al reversed'.²² Burdened with such a consciousness, Gower set about writing his book on good and bad kingship, on the 'worthi princes' and criminals characterized by 'tirannie and crualte', and, most importantly, on learning the value of self-rule.²³ This last theme, in particular, allowed Gower to incorporate Alexander more than he had in his previous works and in the most pointed fashion of his career.²⁴ Although most of the attention to Alexander in

²¹ Pearsall, 'Gower's Latin in the *Confessio Amantis*'; Emmerson, 'Reading Gower in a Manuscript Culture'; and Nicholson, 'Gower's Revisions in the *Confessio Amantis*', all offer insightful discussions of the textual and codicological evolution of the *Confessio Amantis*.

²² *Confessio amantis* in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), Prologue 24–30; p. 2 prints the variant readings of the first recension underneath these verses.

²³ *Confessio amantis* in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), Prologue 45–49. On Gower's scheme of exemplary good and bad kingship, see Peck, 'The Politics and Psychology of Governance in Gower'.

²⁴ Olsson, *John Gower and the Structures of Conversion*, p. 187, argues that the story of

the *Confessio* has centred on the retelling of both the Nectanabus story in the sixth book and of Aristotle's education of Alexander in the seventh book rather than the conqueror's striking suitability for Gower's overall agenda, by the time the poet composed this third work, he had very well begun, as argued above, to promote his reservations about Alexander and Macedon as imitable models of the classical world.²⁵

As Gower well knew, Aristotle had taught Alexander how to be a wise and just king, but the pupil failed to take the lessons to heart. In the *Confessio*, Gower recycles that same education for one of his kings (Richard), who would likewise collapse in disgrace over the course of the poet's revisions of the *Confessio*, and for another (Henry) who would represent a time of change and renewed hope and a time, as it were, of *not* imitating Alexander. Indeed, the more Gower appropriates Alexander towards 1399, the year of Henry IV's ascension to the throne, the more he refuses to present the conqueror simply as one who represented a king who failed to heed his education. Alexander rather represented something more frightful to anyone with a vested interest in maintaining the political framework of his nation: not only did he yield to his most destructive proclivities, but he was also assassinated by his own men, and his empire was torn asunder by ambitious underlings. As Gower explains his vision of educating a king in the *Confessio amantis* and relies all the more on his established critical stance against Alexander, these sorts of concerns surely weighed heavily on his mind, given the events of Richard's reign that had informed his two previous major works.²⁶ More than in the *Mirour de l'omme* and the *Vox clamantis*, he insists on this road to national destruction as beginning with the ruler himself, and he maintains an Alexander whose reason could not subdue his will, and who, as a result of his inherent vices and his disregard for Aristotle's teaching, obeyed his desires in spreading war across the globe.

Nectanabus in the sixth book also condemns Olympias, whose rapt pleasure in hearing the sorcerer's 'prophecies' of Alexander are just as suspect as his pleasure in telling them. As for the seventh book, although Macaulay regarded the education of Alexander as a digression from Genius's agenda, it is now considered to have a central role in the *Confessio*; for a survey, see McKinley, 'Kingship and the Body Politic'; and Nicholson, *Love and Ethics in Gower's 'Confessio Amantis'*.

²⁵ Gower also addresses Nectanabus in the Anglo-Norman *Traitié IV*, wherein he explicitly raises the subject in order to condemn sorcery and adultery; see Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, I (1899), 383.

²⁶ Bunt, 'Exemplum and Tale in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', p. 150, notes that Gower refers to Alexander in the *Confessio amantis* more than any other hero, whether pagan, Jewish, or Christian.

Yet Gower also offers (or rather repeats) advice on avoiding this fall. His seventh book of the *Confessio amantis*, a summary of Aristotle's education of Alexander, shows just how much he valued the necessity of this education, despite Alexander's failure to heed it. In the Latin heading to this book, he announces the power of education to overcome a man's innate qualities (his 'natura') and to provide him with the capacity to learn that his birth did not.²⁷ Even more impressively, Gower stresses the importance of Alexander's education within the structure of the *Confessio amantis*. In the colophon for the first recension of the text, the conqueror has two teachers, Nectanabus for the sciences, particularly astronomy, and Aristotle.²⁸ Only the latter, with his five points of policy for good kingship, proved valuable, however, for Gower's aim to produce a morally charged 'Mirror for Princes', a manual in miniature on self-governance and the governance of others. Each of Aristotle's five points that informs the seventh book, truth, liberality, justice, pity, and chastity, comprises the philosopher's hope for his famous ward (and by extension, Gower's hope for his own kings), yet each also represents a failure in Alexander's career. For a king characterized by his bombast, prodigality, or a perversion of liberality, unjust warfare, cruelty, and dissipation, Alexander is, in Gower's mind, both the historical addressee and the antithesis of this educational program. Consulting the same texts as his predecessors in the "Mirror-for-Princes" genre, Gower does not reinterpret these cardinal virtues and the demands of practical philosophy, which he distinguishes as training in ethics (how a king should rule himself), economics (how a king should rule domestic and household matters), and policy (how a king should rule his realm).²⁹ Rather, he reinterprets how the genre applies to Alexander. In his prefatory remarks to his discourse on practical philosophy, Gower states that 'set quanto maior Rex est, tanto magis ipsum | Hec scola concernit, qua sua regna regat' ('the greater the king, the more this disputation, by which he can rule his kingdoms, concerns

²⁷ Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), 233: 'Naturam superat doctrina, viro quod et ortus | Ingenii docilis non dedit, ipsa dabit' ('Education conquers nature, and it will provide a man with a taste for learning that his birth did not').

²⁸ Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by Peck, I, 230–31: 'Tractat eciam secundum Nectanabum et Aristotilem super hiis quibus Rex Alexander tam in sui regimen quam aliter eorum disciplina edoctus fuit' ('It also discourses about those things in which King Alexander was tutored in accord with Nectanabus and Aristotle, as much in his governance as in other matters of his instruction').

²⁹ *Confessio amantis* in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), 7. 1649–98.

him').³⁰ Alexander proved that there also existed a greater possibility for failure, particularly when a king fails in his ethical training and self-governance.

Due to his irrational, violent behaviour and the harm he caused others, the sin most associated with Alexander in the *Confessio amantis* is that of the third book, anger ('ira'). Indeed, as Genius instructs Amans on the dangers of anger, he frequently cites Alexander, and he begins his portrait of the Macedonian's temper in an 'exemplum quod hominis impetuosa voluntas sit discrecionis moderamine gubernanda' ('an exemplum on how a man's impetuous will must be governed by an overruling discretion'), as demonstrated in the meeting between the conqueror and the Cynic philosopher Diogenes.³¹ This well-known Roman *moralitas* circulated widely in England and proved especially valuable to writers intent on appropriating the conqueror for their own warnings.³² The famous punch line, so to speak, of the meeting occurs when Alexander offers Diogenes whatever worldly gifts he desires, and the philosopher replies that he wants merely the sunshine, in which he enjoys basking and which the visiting king is blocking. For Genius, the value of the anecdote lies not in this witticism but in the exchange that inspires it. Alexander, eager to converse with the philosopher who has turned back his messengers by proclaiming that the Macedonian is no king of his, visits him personally to seek the cause of this insubordination. In his reply, Diogenes begins with an act of doubling, or casting himself in the same position as the young Alexander:

Sith I ferst resoun understod,
And knew what thing was evel and good,
The will which of my bodi moeveth,
Whos werkes that the God reproeveth,
I have restreigned everemore,
As him which stant under the lore
Of reson, whos soubgit he is,
So that he mai noght don amis:
And thus be weie of covenant

³⁰ Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by Peck, I, 277.

³¹ See the Latin marginal commentary to the tale of Alexander and Diogenes: Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), 3. 1201–1330. For a history of the anecdote, see Sayre, *The Greek Cynics*, pp. 71–73.

³² The best discussion of the Diogenes anecdote remains Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, pp. 83–91. For a survey of the anecdote among classical writers, including Cicero, Seneca, and Valerius Maximus, see Fritz, *Quellen-Untersuchungen zu Leben und Philosophie des Diogenes von Sinope*.

Will is my man and my servant,
And evere hath ben and evere schal.³³

With this sentiment, Diogenes' dialogue with Alexander perfectly complements Genius's lessons for Amans and thus Gower's lessons for Richard. The Macedonian conqueror offers an easily legible icon of wilful, profligate kingship, and like Gower, Diogenes condemns Alexander for putting his appetites before his reason:

Bot forto ben a conquerour
Of worldes good, which mai noht laste,
Thou hiest evere aliche faste,
Wher thou no reson hast to winne:
And thus thi will is cause of Sinne,
And is thi lord, to whom thou servest,
Wherof thou litel thonk deservest.³⁴

While Genius uses the anecdote of Alexander's meeting with Diogenes as a means of introducing how the conqueror's will overruled his reason, when he returns to the matter later in Book Three, in a long criticism of 'motores guerre, que non solum homicidii set vniversi mundi desolacionis mater existit' ('the causes of war, which is the mother not only of homicide but also of grief for the entire world'), he explores the ramifications of this defeat.³⁵ When the conqueror re-appears in the *Confessio amantis*, in fact, he is no longer a petulant young ruler but a dangerous warmonger whose boundless will threatens the entire world, and Genius now introduces Alexander as 'him whom al this Erthe dradde, | Whan he the world so overladdde | Thurgh werre'.³⁶ Again he appropriates Alexander as a lesson against waging illicit war, and again he utilizes a familiar Roman exemplum, the exchange between Alexander and Dionides the pirate, who retorts to the conqueror that the only difference between them is that the world views him, a solitary pirate, as a bandit and the Macedonian, the head of countless subjects, as an emperor.³⁷ However, the core of the exemplum

³³ *Confessio amantis* in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), 3. 1271–81.

³⁴ *Confessio amantis* in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), 3. 1286–92.

³⁵ Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by Peck, I, 287.

³⁶ *Confessio amantis* in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), 3. 2363–65.

³⁷ *Confessio amantis* in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), 3. 2363–2417. Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, pp. 95–98, discusses the medieval reception of the story primarily from Cicero and Augustine.

— in this case, the pirate's skilfulness in convincing Alexander that their titles and reputations are merely a matter of semantics, for they are both robbers at heart — serves but a secondary function, for the anecdote reiterates the larger debate on will and reason and leaders who harm others to fulfil their desires. As Genius allegorically depicts this destructive temperament, a man who is ruled by his will is like a falcon determined to capture its prey and neglectful of everything else around it.³⁸ A man who casts off his reason in favour of his desires becomes, then, a beast, and the world at large becomes his prey.

This sets the stage for Gower's favourite falcon, as it were, of Antiquity, and he parlays this allegory into an exemplum on Alexander's career (the only occasion on which he examines the totality of the conqueror's rise and fall) that strikingly reconsiders the roles of the individual and of Fortune. Genius first stresses that as long as Alexander enjoyed the favour of Fortune, his will led him to subdue the world:

[Alexander] hadde set al his entente,
So as fortune with him wente,
That reson mihte him non governe,
Bot of his will he was so sterne,
That al the world he overran
And what him list he tok and wan.³⁹

Certainly in this passage the conqueror does not simply receive his allotted time on Fortune's Wheel, as suggested in the earlier passage in the *Mirour de l'homme* on the passing of empires at her whim. Rather, he embodies the passing sentiment that occurred earlier in the *Vox clamantis*, namely that Fortune favours the bold but also goads them with success to a false sense of invincibility. Alexander, sensing the benefit of good fortune, thus used his position of power to wage unprovoked, calamitous wars on a global stage.

The Latin marginal commentary on this passage of the *Confessio amantis* repeats the traditional morality that 'quamvis Alexander sua potencia tocius mundi victor sibi subiugaverat imperium, ipse tandem mortis victoria subiugatus cunctipotentis sentenciam evadere non potuit' ('although by his prowess Alexander, the conqueror of the entire world, won an empire under his control, at last he was defeated by omnipotent death and could not evade its sentence').⁴⁰

³⁸ *Confessio amantis* in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), 3. 2430–37.

³⁹ *Confessio amantis* in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), 3. 2441–46.

⁴⁰ Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by Peck, I, 292.

In the main text, however, Genius casts the Macedonian in a harsher light and delves into the complicated questions of individual will and the fluctuations of Fortune. In his telling, Fortune granted Alexander what would today be called 'political currency', and Alexander uses that currency to make war on others for his own benefit and to conquer the world to the furthest reaches of India. Yet when he had reached the apex of his career and examined his new empire from Babylon, Fortune cast him down headlong:

When that he cam to Babiloine,
And wende most in his Empire,
As he which was hol lord and Sire,
In honour forto be received,
Most sodeinliche he was deceived,
And with strong puison envenimed.
And as he hath the world mistimed
Noght as he scholde with his wit,
Noght as he wolde it was aquit.⁴¹

This account of his death transcends the usual tale of the poisoning plot that killed him, for Genius adds his own set of commentaries to Alexander's sudden fall from power, beginning with the notion of punishment in the last three verses and continuing in a longer reflection on the Macedonian's career.

After adapting the aforementioned words of the philosophers at Alexander's tomb (that he who slew others was slain, that he who enjoyed wealth yesterday had naught today, etc.), Genius censures the conqueror for waging perpetual warfare and disturbing world peace, actions for which the conqueror was forever dejected ('desconfit') and which offer a perpetual warning that for 'covetise and worldes pride' a tyrant would kill his fellow man as if they were mere beasts.⁴² Such a man, he insists, can never make amends for what amounts to the sin of murder. Genius does not deny Alexander's extraordinary powers in this passage; rather, the criticism against him stems from Alexander's abuse of those powers in wreaking destruction on innocent peoples. This is a clear condemnation of war, but it is also a daring and iconoclastic condemnation of the conqueror. With the argument that his premature death represented a punishment for his spread of war and that Alexander was a warmonger and a murderer who paid dearly for his sins Gower effectively graduates from echoing the Roman philosophers Seneca and Cicero (both of whom use similar anec-

⁴¹ *Confessio amantis* in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), 3. 2452–60.

⁴² *Confessio amantis* in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, II (1901), 3. 2461–80.

dotal attacks on Alexander, including those of Diogenes the philosopher and the exchange with the pirate) to a historian of and commentator on Alexander's career in the manner of Augustine and Orosius.

This vision of an ambitious, murderous Alexander effects a distinct tragedy that results from the king's criminality and transgressions rather than the whims of Fortune, and he, his empire, and the world at large suffer as a result. Like Roman writers of the late Republic and early Empire, Gower came to understand that Alexander offered a more resounding warning against bad rule than an exemplum for good rule, and like his ancient predecessors he developed his criticism of the conqueror amidst troubled times, when he appropriated Alexander and his empire as a warning for the fate of his own nation. One especially distressful parallel between the conqueror who incurred his own demise and the state of England must surely have been the disastrous reign of Richard II, whom, as discussed above, Gower identified in similar terms as a king whose fortunes soured because of his own faults.

Lancastrian England: A Dubious Hero for the Time

By the time he had written the third version of the *Confessio amantis*, the so-called 'Lancastrian' recension, Gower's preoccupation with Alexander's education and his failure to adhere to it had compelled him once again to employ the Macedonian as an exemplum for a new king. The Latin colophon that reflects on this third version accentuates these concerns under Gower's new monarch, Henry IV:

Tercius iste liber qui ob reuerenciam strenuissimi domini sui domini Henrici de Lancastria, tunc Derbeie Comitis, Anglico sermone conficitur, secundum Danielis prophetiam super huius mundi regnorum mutacione a tempore regis Nabugodonosor vsque nunc tempora distinguit. Tractat eciam secundum Aristotilem super hiis quibus rex Alexander tam in sui regimen quam aliter eius disciplina edoctus fuit. Principalis tamen huius operis materia super amorem et infatuatas amantum passiones fundamentum habet. Nomenque sibi appropriatum Confessio Amantis specialiter sortitus est.

The third book, which is fashioned in the English language on account of reverence to the most vigorous lord, his lord Henry of Lancaster, then count of Derby, differentiated historical times according to the prophecy of Daniel concerning the transformation of the kingdoms of this world, from the time of King Nebuchadnezzar up until now. It also discourses about those things in which King Alexander was tutored in accord with Aristotle, as much in his governance as in other matters

of his instruction. But the principal subject of this work has its basis in love and lovers' infatuated passions. And the name specifically designated for it was chosen to be the *Confessio Amantis*.⁴³

He reflects on the *Confessio* as a tract on history, wherein one sees the constant transition ('mutacio') from one empire to another, a reiteration of Aristotle's education of history's most famous conqueror, and reining in one's passions. By the last recension of the *Confessio*, then, Gower still urges Aristotle's pedagogy on his own king and still concerns himself with the political fluctuations of history that no empire felt more keenly and more unexpectedly than the Macedonians. The education of Alexander in self-governance and the governance of others is a veritable foundation of the *Confessio amantis*, and with a new king on the throne, Gower redoubles his efforts to promote the utility of these lessons and the supreme peril of not adhering to them. He had already witnessed, after all, one king fall victim to destructive behaviour, as he writes of Richard in the *Cronica tripartita* that 'opus inferni est pacem turbare, iustosque regni interficere. Hoc enim Ricardus capitosus dolosa circumvencione facere non timuit' ('it is the work of hell to disturb peace and to slay the just men of a kingdom, and the headstrong Richard was not afraid to do these things by cunning stratagem').⁴⁴ At the end of the century, the necessity for policies of peace and justice are, it seems, as pressing as ever.

So it is that in *In Praise of Peace*, which he wrote upon Henry IV's accession to the throne in 1399, Gower again emphasizes the elements of good kingship and in the process rejects Alexander as a model for anything other than tyranny and misery. The poem clearly marks the culmination of Gower's development of a singular, definitive reception of Alexander, as he condemns more explicitly than at any point in his writings the ancient ruler's inability to restrain his will and mad desire for conquest. No longer is Alexander simply the victim of Fortune, for here he embodies a king who sought to fulfil his egomaniacal agenda by terrorizing others and whose legacy is a dark era of history. Looking into the past, however, one can see plenty of acceptable models of kingship that stand in stark contrast to Alexander. Early in the poem, Gower presents Henry, for example, with an anecdote of Solomon and Alexander and their prayers for

⁴³ Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by Peck, I, 232–33.

⁴⁴ So Gower writes in the marginal commentary that prefaces the *Cronica*, in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, I, 314. The *Cronica* were written after Henry IV came to the throne and represented Gower's most extended examination of Richard's collapse; see Rigg and Moore, 'The Latin Works: Politics, Lament, and Praise'.

reinforcing their power. The first prayed for wisdom to govern his people, but the second, Alexander:

as telleth his histoire,
 Unto the god besoghte in other weie,
 Of all the world to winne the victoire,
 So that undir his swerd it myht obeie.
 In werre he hadde al that he wolde preie,
 The myghti god behight him that behestē,
 The world he wan, and had it of conqueste.

Bot thogh it fel at thilke time so,
 That Alisandre his axinge hath achieved,
 This sinful world was al paiene tho,
 Was non which hath the hihe god believed:
 No wondir was thogh thilke world was grieved,
 Thogh a tiraunt his pourpos myhte winne;
 Al was vengeance and infortune of sinne.⁴⁵

Once again, Gower's concern with ruling by reason rather than will dictates how he remembers kings of the ancient world, and in a manner of speaking, he does not depict the belligerent Alexander as a proper *ruler* at all but a *conqueror*, a man of the sword instead of the crown and throne. He now unmistakably associates the Macedonian with the worst lot of history's infamous figures, the tyrants and mad men of the pagan past. Under such a conqueror, the pagan world suffered frightful calamities (and here Gower again echoes Orosius's Christian condemnation of past ills) but so, too, did his own people. Lurking behind Alexander's global conquest is a wild, ungoverned empire, one forged hastily by warfare and one that, as Gower first wrote in the *Mirour de l'omme*, his survivors would dismember immediately after his death. If Alexander fails to offer a model of kingship, then Macedon fails to offer a model of nation and empire. Both are cast in the dark days of pagan history, when a tyrant like Alexander could disturb a world overrun by 'vengeance and infortune of sinne'.

As the final voice on Alexander in fourteenth-century England, Gower here sounds quite a bit like those of Anglo-Saxon and eleventh-century England. Then, writers (including the *Parva-recapitulatio*-redactor) informed by Orosius's Christian view of history attacked Alexander because he represented the worst of pagan Antiquity, an era characterized by and denigrated for pride, fury, and the violent ambition to forge empires over innocent peoples. In his

⁴⁵ *In Praise of Peace*, in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, III (1901), 36–49.

last statements on the ancient ruler in *In Praise of Peace*, Gower repeats this perspective, a critical but necessary stance, yet his sober reminders that Alexander was, despite his popular fame as a marvellous warrior-king, a corrupted tyrant who was killed at a young age by treachery and whose empire was dissolved by civil war truly made him a 'voice crying' from the wilderness of Alexander's earlier Christian reception. Throughout his writings, Gower remembers Alexander first as a man of a brief reign who trusted in Fortune's favour and the longevity of his earthly power and then as a destructive force who plagued the world with incessant warfare. At last, in this occasional poem for Henry's coronation, Gower recalls both of these views and deduces that neither is a proper way for a king to be remembered. Truly honourable fame resulted from peace and prosperity, and while Alexander briefly achieved the latter, he could not lay claim to the former.⁴⁶

Alexander's fame and Fortune's supposed authority posed, in fact, intriguing questions about kingship at the close of the fourteenth century. While Gower ascribed Richard II's fall to his own faults ('suis ex demeritis'), Jean Creton, the French chronicler attendant upon Richard, also witnessed the events of 1399, and he records his own opinion and the public response that explicitly contrast with Gower's assessment of Richard's deposition and the rise of the Lancastrians. Creton presents Richard's fall in traditional, medieval terms of Fortune's sway and a lack of human accountability:

Now, considering the power, possessions, and grandeur of King Richard, who was so great a lord, reflect what mischief, torment, and grief (*must it be*) for him to be thus dealt with by treason, and by fortune who at all times hath power and authority, severe as she is, to undo those whom she pleases. She is a mistress puissant and proud, most changeable and impetuous [...]. Some she causes to smile, others to sing; and then brings them back to sorrow and misery. At certain times she falsely calls herself a mother, but presently she is stern and bitter; for king or prince, she careth not; it is all one to her, she plainly shows. For, as every one saith, she hath entirely stripped a powerful Christian king of all that he had. One she makes, another she unmakes; her working is a downright dream. In her there is nothing perfect; wherefore no one who is wise and skilled in enduring will pay any regard to her follies and changeable qualities. For we came all naked into this world, poor

⁴⁶ *In Praise of Peace*, in Gower, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Macaulay, III (1901), 281–94. Gower warns Henry that all of the Nine Worthies (Alexander, Hector, Julius Caesar, Judas Maccabeus, David, Joshua, Charlemagne, Godfrey of Bouillon, and Arthur) enjoyed fame, but in vain, for death came to all; fortune in war is ever uncertain, he argues, but peace ensures both the safety of a kingdom and the eternal reward of heaven for its ruler.

caitiffs, and destitute of any good; and we must all likewise return to the earth beneath; prince, king, or earl; let us be who we may.⁴⁷

In Boethian fashion, Creton views history and the human experience as guided by the inevitable, ineluctable decisions of Fortune, who reveals her true nature in her very fickleness and imposes her mutability on all social classes. Gower rather insists that Richard brought about his deposition by his own mistakes and transgressions, and even if the poet's allegiance to Henry casts suspicion on such accusatory treatment of bad kingship, he displays the same attitude toward Alexander over the course of his three major works. His view of history had demonstrably evolved from a general perspective of Fortune raising and lowering empires (commensurate with Creton's view) to specific investigations of criminality and responsibility. For Alexander, this entailed a career built on the subjugation of others, and as his belligerence justly led to regicide and the Macedonian civil wars, the conqueror offered a paradigm only of misguided and destructive rule, as Gower presents in *In Praise of Peace*.

Such an attitude does not merely reject contemporary conceptions of Alexander as the gallant conqueror, seen, for example, in the plethora of fourteenth-century romances of his career, for Gower's insistence that tyranny brought about its own demise also echoes the portrayal of a man corrupted by Fortune and overcome by his own vices. This was the version of Alexander that twelfth-century monastic texts like the *St Albans Compilation* had long ago introduced, but which became less fashionable in the age of scholasticism, when neither the conqueror's unseemly behaviour nor the circumstances of his death denigrated his status in the public eye. In fact, if Creton's account is to be believed, Alexander was still celebrated for his heroics and conquests in 1399, just as Gower was concluding his career-long, condemnatory conception of the conqueror. Creton also records, for example, Henry's lively reception in the streets of London, where his new subjects gave thanks to God for a competent king and conqueror. 'Moreover', he writes, 'the simple and over-credulous people said that he would conquer one of the great portions of the world, and compared him even to Alexander the Great'.⁴⁸ Creton's report of the *vox populi* and the wishful comparison with Henry IV leaves no doubt that the conqueror still thrived as a paradigm of conquest and military heroics, and this popular comparison insists that Alexander be remembered and glorified for all that he accomplished rather than for all that was undone in the last phase

⁴⁷ Webb, 'Translation of a French Metrical History', pp. 110–13.

⁴⁸ Webb, 'Translation of a French Metrical History', p. 178.

of his career and after his death. For Gower, the debate over Alexander's reception centred around this very divide. While romances (which the Dominican friar Nicholas Trevet had derided, in terms that anticipate Creton's report of Londoners watching Henry IV, as 'uulgata hystoria' in the 1330s) celebrated Alexander's deeds and lamented his murder, the tradition of 'true history', in the words of the eleventh-century *Parva recapitulatio*, related his vices and violence. Evolving from Orosius to the Roman Stoic portrayal of the conqueror as an inherently vicious figure undone by his success and self-destructive proclivities, this 'historical' view had directly challenged its only counter-tradition, that of romance, for centuries. In the generation after Gower, however, for the first time in the Latin West Greek-speaking biographers and historians of Alexander began to challenge their predecessors, especially the work of Justin, whose epitome of the *Philippic Histories* was so influential in England. Now, over the fifteenth and sixteenth century, ancient authorities provided the means of forgiving and even understanding Alexander's faults and lauding his career not for any fantastical feats but for creating a unified, multi-cultural empire, based on an extraordinary ambition and vision of human potential.

Part Three

English Humanism and the Greek Alexander

DUKE HUMFREY'S ALEXANDER: LYDGATE AND PLUTARCH

The fifteenth century, thanks in large part to the patronage of Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester, witnessed the transition from the medieval to the early modern reception of Alexander. By 1399, John Gower had rejected the scholastic reception of the famed conqueror by refusing to advocate him as a political model for Henry IV, the king whose reign began the new century. Gower's efforts were not quite equal to the monastic historiographers of previous eras, investigators who sifted through classical sources to uncover an accurate narrative of the Macedonian Empire, but his writings initiated a seminal change in Alexander's reputation in England. Like Cicero and Seneca, Gower understood in Alexander the disreputable rule of a tyrant and a man whose aggression and lack of self-control offered the perfect vehicle for political anxieties in a turbulent age. With this understanding, Gower promoted a view of Alexander that seemingly failed to interest Chaucer but one that would maintain its own influence in English vernacular poetry. While the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw the blossoming of Middle English Alexander romances, it was also an era whose canonical writers (particularly Petrarch and Boccaccio on the Continent and Gower in England) re-evaluated the conqueror's unsettling character.

Contributing to this re-evaluation in the first half of the fifteenth century, John Lydgate, the Benedictine monk of Bury St Edmunds commissioned by Duke Humfrey to produce the compendium of tragedies known as the *Fall of Princes*, is a central figure in this intersection of older and newer attitudes towards Alexander. In collating classical sources with those closer to his

own age and in isolating the reasons for Alexander's demise in his condemnable behaviour, Lydgate also amalgamates the stance of Roman histories from his own, long-standing monastic tradition with the sorts of anxieties over Alexander expressed by Italian writers and Gower in the previous century. If later humanists following Duke Humfrey's circle had adhered to Lydgate's portrait of the conqueror, then the monastic conception of Alexander would have achieved a lasting influence. Throughout the fifteenth century, however, English patrons of humanism took such an interest in importing Latin translations of Greek Alexander texts, particularly Plutarch's biography of him in the *Parallel Lives*, that a new, idealized version of the conqueror replaced the earlier Roman one of anxieties and misgivings. As a result, the tragedy of Alexander in the *Fall of Princes* straddles the border of monasticism and humanism under Duke Humfrey, who, as Lydgate's patron, both commissioned the last medieval voice on Alexander and introduced the first early modern one by promoting the translation of Plutarch, the most influential Greek source on Alexander in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England.

The Fall of Princes

No discussion of Lydgate's portrayal of Alexander in the *Fall of Princes* can avoid the contentious reception of semantic and generic nuances of tragedy in the late Middle Ages. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, Nicholas Trevet developed a working definition of tragedy in his studies of Boethius as 'a song of great iniquities' (some manuscripts add 'great crimes') 'that begins in prosperity and ends in adversity',¹ and Chaucer, who arranges his *de casibus* stories in the *Monk's Tale* around the whims of Fortune and has very little to say about Alexander's vices, appropriated this notion of a prosperous beginning and an adverse ending.² Had Chaucer adhered to Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*, he would have presented an Alexander corrupted by Persian wealth, 'vino et ira sepiissime superatum, alto pressum dolore, et gravissimis agitatum curis' ('frequently conquered by wine and his angry temper,

¹ Kelly, *Ideas and Forms of Tragedy*, p. 128.

² The definition of a tragedy provided by Chaucer himself in *Boece*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Benson, bk II, prose 2. 70. Kelly, *Chaucerian Tragedy*, pp. 51–57 argues that Chaucer was influenced by Nicholas Trevet and ultimately William of Conches for his definition of tragedy, although his particular copy lacked Trevet's attribution of iniquity to the subject's tragedy. This criminality would become for Lydgate a crucial element in defining Alexander's tragedy.

oppressed by deep depression, and disturbed by grievous concerns'),³ and one generally similar to Gower's representation of a conqueror unable to control his vices. Making use of old Roman anxieties over Alexander's degradation in the East and of the wretched dismemberment of his empire, Boccaccio examines ancient Macedon through the lens of excessive behaviour and vices, reflective of his guiding interest in 'Dei potentiam, fragilitatem suam, et Fortune lubricum' ('the power of God, one's own fragility, and the unsteadiness of Fortune').⁴ Transgression plays a similar role in Lydgate's collection of tragic falls (which he adapted from Laurent de Premierfait's translation of the *De casibus*),⁵ yet in the case of the Macedonians, he surpassed his predecessors in explicating the criminal behaviour of both Alexander and his countrymen.

As 'an anthology of narratives of tyranny, tragic downfall, and political mismanagement', the *Fall of Princes* has much to add to the burgeoning genre of tragedy and the moral causes of downfall.⁶ As Nigel Mortimer has recently argued, the parameters of late medieval tragedy are set by the Boethian view that adversity befalls everyone, whether or not they merit it, and Augustine's 'view of tragedy in which deserved misfortunes meet the iniquities of evil men', but the question of Lydgate's moral intentions for the genre and such definitions continues to provoke debate.⁷ On the one extreme, tyrants like Alexander are read as exemplars of Fortune's power rather than those who paid the price for criminal behaviour,⁸ and on the other is Lydgate's attribution of one's *casus* to 'vicious lyuyng' and

³ Boccaccio, *De casibus virorum illustrium*, ed. by Hall, bk iv. 7. Boitani, 'The "Monk's Tale": Dante and Boccaccio', p. 54 explains the parallels between the *Monk's Tale* and the *De casibus* and concludes that Chaucer 'read it attentively and used it as an authority and as a source on specific subjects'.

⁴ Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, I, p. xlviii.

⁵ Laurent explains that original sin led to humans' subsequent grief and subjugation to Fortune. In Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, I, p. lv, he writes of Adam and Eve's 'humaine nature': 'Ilz getterent vng hazart par le quel ilz perdirent les principaulx doarres tant de corps comme de ame. Lenfainte et le comptent de celle seule loy [...] en engendra vng tres grief, par quoi toute hu[m]aine creature deuint subiecte a fortune et a sa moquerie' ('They threw the dice and thereby lost the principle gifts of the body as much as of the soul. The breaking of and the reckoning for this sole law [...] brought about a powerful grief, by which every human creative became subject to Fortune and her mockery').

⁶ Mortimer, *John Lydgate's 'Fall of Princes'*, p. 56.

⁷ Mortimer, *John Lydgate's 'Fall of Princes'*, pp. 164–65.

⁸ For example, Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture*, p. 135, who argues that Alexander and Caesar are 'exemplars not of the danger of rejecting the four cardinal virtues [...] but of the sheer contingency of Fortune's operation in the world'.

his view of reason as the means of negating Fortune, even if he does not offer many examples of either in the *Fall of Princes*.⁹ Tragedy in the *Fall of Princes* need not, however, obfuscate Lydgate's agenda in presenting the Macedonian Empire through a variety of characters and under the influence of both contemporary and classical sources. The nature of the moralities that Lydgate derives from individual falls (at the request of Duke Humfrey), and his explanation of his work as a collection of tragedies leave no doubt that he viewed the Macedonians as responsible for bad leadership and their subsequent demise.¹⁰

Despite the disagreement on whether or not Lydgate actually considered his subjects to deserve their tragedies, the case of Alexander and his empire unquestionably offers an exemplum of immoral and destructive behaviour punished by Fortune. In his treatment of ancient Macedon, Lydgate combines tragedy (as he and Gower understood the fall of great individuals to be due to their faults) and history (as both his Benedictine tradition and the new texts circulating under Duke Humfrey's patronage understood the degradation of Alexander). The maturity of his view of Alexander in the *Fall of Princes* is apparent in the contrast between the conqueror's role in this longer narrative and Lydgate's remarks on him in his earlier poetry. Before he undertook the massive compendium he clearly had a superficial conception of Alexander that he developed, as had Gower, with time. In his courtly poems of the 1420s, Lydgate appropriates the conqueror as a readily available icon of Fortune's whims and the fleeting nature of kingship. In *As a Mydsomer Rose*, he surveys the heroes of old (some of whom are traditionally included in the Nine Worthies) once mighty but now relegated to a passing reference:

Wher is Iulius, proudest in his empire,
With his tryumphes moost imperyal?
Wher is Pirrus, that was lord and sire
Of Ynde in his estat roial?
And wher is Alisaundir that conqueryd al?
Failed leiser his testament to dispoose.
Nabugodonosor or Sardonapal?
Al stant on chaung like a mydsomyr rose.¹¹

⁹ Budra, *A Mirror for Magistrates*, p. 49.

¹⁰ That sixteenth-century readers considered Lydgate's work a tragedy is also evident. The 1554 first version of the *Mirror for Magistrates* was printed, for example, with the *Fall of Princes*; although later editions of the *Mirror* were advertized as histories, this initial version was printed as a tragedy. See Lucas, 'A Mirror for Magistrates' and the Politics of the English Reformation, p. 2.

¹¹ *As a Mydsomer Rose*, in Lydgate, *The Minor Poems*, ed. by MacCracken, pp. 73–80.

This mingling of heroes and villains lacks both praise and condemnation, yet as rulers who established far-reaching empires, they are instantly identifiable. In a mumming of ancient figures, few could fail to recognize the two widely known 'Greek' and Roman examples of warrior-rulers murdered at the height of their power — and, in Alexander's case, the failure to provide his empire with a plan of succession — and no other knowledge of their historical careers is necessary to appreciate the pageantry of the passage. *A Mumming at London*, which presents Fortune as the 'Lady of mutabyltee' always 'ful of transmutacyouns', denies Alexander even this meagre individuality.¹² Here, before several lines on Caesar's rise to power and murder at the hands of his compatriots, Lydgate assesses Alexander's career in three lines: '[Fortune] made Alexaundre wynnen al, | [th]at noman him with stoned dare, | And caste him dovne, er he was ware'.¹³ Clearly, this is not the same conception of Alexander that Lydgate encounters in Laurent de Premierfait's translation of Boccaccio, but in working through the extraordinary volume of ancient figures in the *Fall of Princes* Lydgate does not possess the same sensibility towards the conqueror as he demonstrated in the court poems. In his larger work, Lydgate's task is not to reference Alexander among the famed kings of Antiquity but to examine the causes (in his mind, both historical and moral) behind the wretched passing of both the individuals who fought with or against Alexander and the entire Macedonian Empire. While he remains faithful to his sources in presenting the basic narratives of such figures as Callisthenes, Darius, and Olympias, Lydgate's translation also illustrates his increasingly accusatory stance against Alexander, his successors, and indeed the very policy of building an empire on the blood of other peoples. Like Gower, he emphasizes the dangers of pride and ambition, the definitive traits of immoral behaviour that lead to individual falls and public suffering.

¹² *A Mumming at London*, in Lydgate, *The Minor Poems*, ed. by MacCracken, 2–7.

¹³ *A Mumming at London*, in Lydgate, *The Minor Poems*, ed. by MacCracken, ll. 64–66. While Lydgate includes Alexander for his traditional association with magnanimity in the Nine Worthies for the coronation for Henry VI (*Ballade to King Henry VI Upon His Coronation*, 61), he appropriately excludes Alexander from the same group in *On Gloucester's Approaching Marriage*. By then, as is argued below, both Gloucester, patron of the *Fall of Princes*, and the poet would have had a strong case against praising Alexander. Lydgate, *The Minor Poems*, ed. by MacCracken, features only a passing reference among Lydgate's religious poems, at *Misericordias Domini in eternum cantabo*, I, 49–50: 'Off Alisaundre clerkys synge and reede, | Afftir his Conquest slayn in Babilon'.

Lydgate's portrayal of Alexander and Macedon also represents a fifteenth-century evolution of Gower's attitudes of the earlier generation. In the *Fall of Princes*, Alexander faces the same charges, rule built on belligerence and marred by the inability to retain moral education, seen in Gower's three major works.¹⁴ There is undoubtedly a strain of the *Secretum secretorum* in both writers' responses to the conqueror — Gower adapts the text, of course, in Book Seven of the *Confessio amantis* and Lydgate would translate it at the end of his life — but the latter transcends the boilerplate image of a famed philosopher educating a famed conqueror.¹⁵ Like Gower, Lydgate is interested primarily in the failure of this education, but he does not merely see a conqueror led by ambition and a taste for violence. Rather, Lydgate represents the intellectual heritage at his disposal, the monastic transmission of Roman narratives of Macedon (in his case, the library at the Benedictine Bury St Edmunds) that was soon to clash with the interest in newly available classical texts under Duke Humfrey's patronage of humanist scholars and translators. These traditions, the twelfth-century revival of the Roman Alexander that culminated in the *St Albans Compilation* and the fifteenth-century introduction of other classical studies of the conqueror, notably the Greek account by Plutarch, ultimately judge Alexander in contrasting manners: the former blames the Macedonians, including their leader, for destroying their empire, while the latter celebrates Alexander's virtues. Lydgate subscribes to the monastic view, particularly in his views on Fortune and the conqueror. In traditional Boethian terms, Fortune is credited for both Alexander's success and decline: she raises him up and casts him down, a degree of authority that negates his virtues and vices alike, yet in the prologue to the *Fall of Princes*, Lydgate relates the nuances of divine favour and punishment. Pride ('surquedie') leads men to think that they control Fortune, to forsake God, and ultimately to incur his wrath.¹⁶ Alexander demonstrates both the inevitable fall in this neglect and the means by which

¹⁴ See, e.g., Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 1. 6252–58: 'Though Alisaundre was myhti off puissaunce, | And al the world[e] hadde in his demeyne, | Yit was his resoun vnder thobeisaunce | Off flesschi lustis fetrid in a cheyne; | For in his persone will was souereyne, | His resoun bridled be sensualite, | Troubling the fredam off riht & equite'. Lydgate similarly accuses Alexander of sensual desire in Lydgate, *Reson and Sensuallyte*, ed. by Sieper, 4419–21.

¹⁵ Lydgate did not finish translating the entire text of the *Secretum*, which Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p. 296, dismisses as 'a work as nearly worthless as any that Lydgate penned'.

¹⁶ Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 1. 176–77: 'Supposyng[e] in ther surquedie | Ther estatys sholde be durable'. Moreover, Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 1. 184, explains that some princes 'off roial power sette off God riht nouht' and face divine punishment as a result.

Fortune strikes down others through human agency; he plays the role of Fortune's agent, through whom she kills his enemies and, more disconcertingly, those within his own ranks. As such, Alexander's story is more personalized in the *Fall of Princes*, not a simple example of Fortune's control over human affairs, a portrayal that Lydgate owes to the long-standing Benedictine interest in the Roman Alexander.

The human nature of Lydgate's Alexander is best seen in the fall of Callisthenes, the famed philosopher suddenly assaulted by Fortune through the conqueror's tyrannical behaviour. The story presents the failed pedagogy that had attracted Gower to Alexander as the antithesis of good government that begins with such promise:

For Alisaundre, of kynges most enteere
 And most worthi, to speke of hih prowesse,
 Dede Aristotiles humbeli requere,
 To prouide & doon his bisynesse
 Bi expert knowing & auynsynesse
 To sende hym oon, which of philosophie
 Mihte bi good counsail his conquest magnefie

To write also his tryumphes digne of glorie
 And to remembre his actis marciall,
 Put his palmys of kniethod in memorie,
 And to directen in especiall
 His roial noblesse in vertu morall,
 That non errour be sey[e]n heer nor there
 In hym that sholde al the world conquere.¹⁷

Callisthenes' most important role is not to perpetuate Alexander's legacy or to provide him with a textual memorial of his achievements but to instil in him virtuous behaviour. In an echo of the *Secretum secretorum* tradition, Callisthenes represents an extension of Aristotle and the philosophical guidance that will help Alexander establish his empire. The next lines deny, however, the success of moral instruction in the East, and the cause of his corruption lies in traditional Roman anxieties over decadence and absolute power:

But if fill so of knihtli auenture,
 That of Fortunis hih promocioun,
 That he bi armys proudli gan recure

¹⁷ Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 4. 1198–1211

Of Perse and Mede the myhti regioun,
 Brouhte kyng Darie onto subieccioun,
 Gat hool his tresour, that no man myhte expresse
 Tacounte the noumbre of his gret richesse.

Which vnseur tresour & slidyng habundaunce,
 With wastyng shadwes of godis transitorie,
 In surquedous pride gan so his herte auauunce
 Bi fals ambicioun & outraious veynglorie,
 That made hym lese mynde & eek memorie,
 To knowe of nature he was no man mortall,
 But lik to goddis that wer celestiall.¹⁸

The philosopher's response continues these anxieties, as his rational attempts to convince Alexander of his mortality (e.g., arguing that he was born of mortal parents and that he suffers from sickness and hunger) meet with an irrational mind befuddled by vices, as the conqueror yields to 'dronkenesse, | Thoruh vinolence loste ofte his resoun; | Than of ire and furious hastynesse | He wolde smyte & hurte in his woodnesse'.¹⁹ The next victim of this 'woodnesse' is, of course, Callisthenes, whom Alexander charges with conspiracy for not acknowledging his divinity and condemns to death by dismemberment.

This treatment of Callisthenes, and then of Clitus, the senior officer whom Alexander kills for praising Philip too emphatically (proof for Lydgate that the conqueror 'was no god nor resonable man'),²⁰ were veritable icons of Alexander's most despicable behaviour. The murders of both men serve as cornerstones of his paranoia and violence in the *St Albans Compilation*, for example, and in the translation of classical texts from the age of Duke Humfrey onward, Callisthenes and Clitus would become increasingly recognizable tragic figures in their own right. For Lydgate, they, like all of the Macedonians, represent the notion of tragedy based upon the unsteady balance between prosperity and adversity. In the envoi of the Callisthenes story, Lydgate insists that one derive from it not simply the unpredictable nature of Fortune but that of rulers as well:

Thus in pryncis furious & cruell
 Men may cleerli an euidence see,
 How ther lordshipe is nat perpetuall,
 But ful of chaung & mutabilite:

¹⁸ Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 4. 1212–25.

¹⁹ Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 4. 1297–1300.

²⁰ Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 4. 1400.

Of cheer now freendli, now sodeyn enmyte.²¹

Indeed, when Lydgate reflects on the Macedonian Empire later in Book Four, which covers both Alexander and his successors, he assesses its violent demise in these very terms, as the successors enjoy their leader's legacy 'Til Fortune thoruh hir doubilnesse | Shewed hir myht, vnwarli to ordeyne | Afftir prosperite aduersite sodeyne'.²² While Alexander cannot handle prosperity, namely his victory over Persia, his successors cannot handle the adversity posed by his death, but in Lydgate's scheme of history and tragedy, neither party is blameless. When Alexander builds his empire, 'lik a god, most pompous & elat' he convinces himself that he is the son of Jupiter and drunkenly rages against his own men, but his successors display 'the grete sorwes, the mortal disauailes, | The losse of reumys', and as they instigate civil wars, 'the blood eek shad in veyn, | Begunne of werris & marcial apparailles'.²³

Chief among these new culprits of belligerent behaviour is Perdiccas, whom Alexander tacitly elects his heir by giving him his ring on his deathbed. Laurent and Boccaccio simply reference Perdiccas in passing by mentioning that he instigated a war with Ptolemy and died therein, but for Lydgate he becomes the first of two villainous heirs to Alexander's empire who are worthy of discussion. Like his slain leader, Perdiccas owes his death not to Fortune but to his own behaviour:

Thouh he of knihthod & [of] hih prowesse,
Of manli force & also of prudence
Passed al other, the stori berth witnesse,
Bi vicious pride & froward boistousnesse
He was mor hyndred, thoruh his owne outrage,
Than al his enmyes myhte doon to hym damage.

For thoruh his pride & gret extorsiouns,
Fro Macedoyne the people of that contre
Fledde into other straunge regeouns.²⁴

Perdiccas, too, possesses the inherent military skills to earn the empire over his peers, but he, too, shares in the pride that, in Lydgate's view, plagues Alexander and all tyrants. Such men cannot overcome their envy and ambition, which,

²¹ Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 4. 1401–05.

²² Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 4. 2322–24.

²³ Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 4. 2144; 4. 2004–06.

²⁴ Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 4. 2102–10.

despite the smaller scale of these episodes in Book Four, attracts Lydgate no less than it had Ralph Gubiun in arranging his *St Albans Compilation* three centuries earlier (and devoting two books to the Macedonian civil wars) or, for that matter, the redactor of the *Parva recapitulatio* four centuries earlier. Circumstances beyond their control — Alexander's poisoning in Babylon — thrust the successors into positions of power, but they are as ill-equipped to handle it as he was, and in the end their vices, too, bring about their destruction. Lydgate asserts this interpretation of history more explicitly with the fall of Olympias, the other figure of the civil wars whom he discusses at length. Her fate in Lydgate compendium of tragedies, to be killed by the son of the man who had plotted her own son's murder, fittingly ends a political career that begins with her implications in Philip's assassination and Alexander's rise to power and ends with her attempted coup after her son's murder. He denies her any virtue and vilifies Olympias to an extent not seen in his portrayal of the other Macedonians:

in hir entrailles al malis was enclosed
 And al contagious venym serpentyne,
 Nat lik a woman, but as a feend disposid,
 Able to destroe al vertuous disciplyne:
 Thus she began; thus she dede fyne.
 In vicious moordre she dede hir ay delite
 Wherfor of hire me list no mor tendite.²⁵

Her justified death also leads Lydgate back to the role of Fortune, who, he explains in his envoi, cast Olympias down because she took such pleasure in lust (i.e., her supposed affair with Philip's assassin), murder, and vengeance.

Boccaccio's account of ancient Macedon ultimately derives from the influence of Roman Stoicism and the *Philippic Histories*, which Lydgate consulted alongside Laurent's translation of the *De casibus virorum illustrium*, but the identification of Alexander's conquest of Persia as the proverbial root of all evil and the point at which he grew avaricious, considered himself a god, and killed any of his friends and countrymen who opposed his delusions of divinity is not simply important for the continued influences of classical histories in England. Such an attitude, along with that which Lydgate shows towards Alexander's successors and Olympias, also marks the first time that the Roman view of Alexander as a tyrant corrupted by Eastern mores and the widespread criminality of his heirs appears in the English vernacular. In his first major

²⁵ Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 4. 2563–69.

work, the *Troy Book*, Lydgate expresses his belief that a successful translator produces works of didactic value and, in particular, historical accuracy, and while Duke Humfrey's desire for an emphasis on moral readings in the envois of the *Fall of Princes* accords with the first of these concerns, Lydgate proves his own desire to seek historical clarity in sources beyond Laurent's French translation.²⁶ In relating Alexander's campaigns into the East, Lydgate mentions the prophecy that whoever unravelled the Gordian knot would conquer Asia and provides a lengthy background narrative that he claims he interpolates from Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories*.²⁷ Justin does not recount the story of Gordius and his cart, but the *St Albans Compilation* that is based primarily on his epitome does, and Lydgate could have consulted this compendium at Bury St Edmunds.²⁸ Either through his monastery or Duke Humfrey's library he surely had access to the *Philippic Histories* on its own, and both the original text and the interpolated version in the *St Albans Compilation* also feature the story of Perdiccas's ambition after Alexander's death (which Lydgate judges harshly but does not borrow from Laurent or Boccaccio) and the identity of the conqueror's slain son Hercules, also unknown to the Italian writer and his French translator.²⁹

Lydgate's desire to seek a classical source to bolster the historical authority of his work, as well as his interest in Alexander's corruption by the Eastern lifestyle rather than his perceived victimization by Fortune, places him in the vanguard of the commingling of monastic and humanist treatments of history under Duke Humfrey, although both men owe as much, if not more, to medieval traditions of writing and reading Antiquity as to the new methods commissioned from Italy. Indeed, the *ad fontes* approach that characterizes the *Fall of Princes* was used by the *Parva recapitulatio*-redactor in the eleventh century

²⁶ See, e.g., Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. by Bergen, ll. 256–67: 'For clerkys han this story [of Troy] so depeynt, | That deth nor age, by no maner weye, | The trouthe may not maken for to deye; | Al-be that somme han the trouthe spared | In her writyng, and pleylny not declared | So as it was, nor tolde out faithfully, | But it transformed in her poysy | Thorough veyne fables, whiche of entencioun | They han contrived by false transumpcioun | To hyde trouthe falsely vnder cloude, | And the sothe of malys for to schroude.'

²⁷ See Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 4. 1737–38: 'Prudent Iustinus, an olde cronicleer, | In his cronicles reherseth this storye'.

²⁸ Cambridge, Corpus Christi Coll., MS 219, fols 14^v–15^r interpolates the story of Gordius and the Gordian knot from Orosius's *Historiae adversum paganos*.

²⁹ The fifth book of the *St Albans Compilation* relates, for example, the wars of Perdiccas and the murder of Alexander's family, interpolated from the *Philippic Histories*, Books XIII–XIV.

to ascertain the 'true history' of Alexander and his empire, and if Lydgate consulted the *St Albans Compilation*, then he relied on a similar approach from the twelfth century to find new sources on Macedonian history. The *Philippic Histories* (or the *St Albans Compilation*) provided Lydgate with the portrait of a conqueror who fell victim to Persian treasure, wine, and a misguided faith in royal divinity, but the role of Fortune, who gives Alexander and his successors the opportunity to govern a global empire only to see how it would elicit immoral behaviour, anticipates the coming debates sparked by Humfrey's patronage of Italian humanists, particularly in the revival of such classical biographers as Plutarch and Curtius Rufus. As examined below, Plutarch's extraordinary influence on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century conceptions of Alexander begins with Humfrey's patronage as well, a fact that further attests to the composition of the *Fall of Princes* amidst Humfrey's 'new appreciation of the classics, attempting a meeting of the Latin humanist and classical texts with the contemporary production in the vernacular'.³⁰

Lydgate's work encapsulates such 'medieval' and 'Renaissance' crosscurrents that scholars have long debated in Humfrey's library. While Lydgate's moralizing envois have suggested to some the persistence of standard medieval reading habits and clearly represent the "Mirror-for-Princes" tradition' that flourished under the Lancastrians,³¹ his portrayal of Alexander and his empire cannot be dismissed as redundantly medieval. As Lydgate relies on both Boccaccio and Laurent's *de casibus* narratives as well as a classical treatment of Macedon, he articulates the critical attitudes towards the conqueror in the late Middle Ages. From the Boccaccian perspective available under Duke Humfrey, he derives the accusatory stance that vices, not Fortune, cause one's downfall, and from the Roman perspective available at Bury St Edmunds he isolates Alexander's fall in his pride over his military success and material gains in the East. Lydgate then carries the monastic reception of Alexander an important step forward: the *St Albans Compilation* creates an acutely condemnatory narrative of Macedon through the interpolation of classical sources, but it does not offer its own moralizing explanations for the empire's collapse. It only provides the reader with the explanation found in Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories*, namely that

³⁰ Petrina, *Cultural Politics in Fifteenth-Century England*, p. 217. According to Weiss, 'The Library of John Tiptoft', p. 161, this famous patron of humanist scholarship owned a copy of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (now BL, MS Royal 18. D. iv), a fact that confirms the poet's success among progressive book collectors other than Humfrey.

³¹ See, e.g., Summit, *Memory's Library*, p. 30; and Saygin, *Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester*, pp. 62–63.

the Macedonians ended so wretchedly because they could not resist the temptations posed by power and wealth. That Lydgate provides his own explanations in his envois has led to the reception of the *Fall of Princes* as 'medieval' in a generally pejorative sense, but, as argued above, Lydgate's explicit identification of Alexander's pride, drunkenness, and belief in his divinity as the causes of his downfall marks a major advancement in both the conqueror's reception in late medieval England and in the *de casibus* genre. A simple comparison with Chaucer's final remarks on Alexander from the *Monk's Tale* illustrates the profundity of Lydgate's consideration of ancient Macedon:

Who shal me yeven teeris to compleyne
The deeth of gentillesse and of franchise,
That al the world weilded in his demeyne?
And yet hym thoughte it myghte nat suffise,
So ful was his corage of heigh emprise.
Allas, who shal me helpe to endite
False Fortune, and poyson to despise,
The whiche two of al this wo I wyte?³²

Rather than attributing Alexander's fall to Fortune and treachery (and certainly not mourning his passing), Lydgate continues Gower's sense of culpability in attributing the conqueror's demise to his belligerence and lack of self-control, as well as that of Boccaccio, who emphasizes criminality rather than the whims of Fortune in surveying famous historical individuals.

In so doing, Lydgate presents history as a 'Mirror for Princes' reflective of his favourite themes (e.g., the mutability of earthly authority and the total, public misery caused by war),³³ but he also presents tragedy as a genre defined by criminality and personal responsibility. As Larry Scanlon has recently argued, the figures in the *Fall of Princes* and Lydgate's moralizing interpretations of their careers invite the reader to engage with the rise to power and the inevitable punishment of elevated individuals laid low by their pride, a relationship that foretells the fundamental dynamic of dramatic tragedy in the following century.³⁴ This similarity exists because of the older monastic intellectual tradition and the burgeoning humanistic one in which Lydgate produced his work and in which his work is historically contextualized. Lydgate may evoke Chaucer's legacy throughout his poetic corpus, but his 'fall' of Alexander and Macedon

³² Chaucer, *The Monk's Tale*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Benson, 7. 775–82.

³³ Schirmer, 'The Importance of the Fifteenth Century', p. 107.

³⁴ Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, pp. 345–46.

owes nothing to his predecessor's version other than their mutual classification as Italian-inspired *de casibus* compendia. Unlike his countryman, Lydgate presents Alexander, his mother, and his successors as individuals of ambition and vice and models not of how to build an empire but of how humans are corrupted by such power and ultimately undermine the empire. Fortune gives the opportunity for greatness, in other words, and human nature squanders it. This interpretation of *casus* distances Lydgate from Chaucer, then, and places his work in dialogue with the new classics and the new humanism (giving full credit to the classicizing efforts of the twelfth century) of Duke Humfrey's patronage and library: the Italian innovators of the *virī illustres* compendia, the *Philippic Histories*, the Roman text that had inspired sweeping changes in Alexander's reception in twelfth-century England, and Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, the Greek text that would transform this reception all over again.

Petrarch's De viris illustribus

The transition from the medieval to early modern reception of Alexander is exemplified by Duke Humfrey's third donation of books to Oxford in 1443, a donation that in many ways signals a movement towards the new scholarship on the Continent.³⁵ This, 'the most interesting [booklist] from the point of view of the students of English humanism', collates the sources and literary traditions behind Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (the *Philippic Histories* and Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*), Alexander's first and harshest humanist critic (Petrarch, in his own narrative of 'illustrious men'), and the text that subsequent humanists would rely on more than any other to gain insight into Alexander's character (several translations of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*).³⁶ This list does not simply represent the availability for the first time of a Greek biographer of Alexander or even the scrutiny of his moral and psychological state, for this sort of examination — most associated with Plutarch's opening statements that he intends to write lives, not histories, and to seek virtue, vice, and overall character in minor speeches and actions — had already informed the *Philippic Histories* and the Boccaccian genre appropriated by Lydgate. In both of these traditions, the Roman Stoic perspective and the *de casibus* tragedy, Alexander's seduction by eastern wealth, desire to be treated as a god, and vio-

³⁵ Petrina, *Cultural Politics in Fifteenth-Century England*, p. 252.

³⁶ Petrina, *Cultural Politics in Fifteenth-Century England*, pp. 250, 252. For complete inventories of the three donations, see Sammut, *Unfredo duca di Gloucester*, pp. 60–132.

lence towards his fellow Macedonians, not his battlefield exploits and expeditions, define the man, and because of the pervasive influence of this exploration of the conqueror's emotional state in English medieval monasticism, Plutarch's biographical methodology is not as novel as it may seem. The disparity among the books in Humfrey's 1443 donation is one of traditional condemnation of vice and belligerence in Latin texts and the burgeoning admiration for building a global empire in their Greek counterparts.

In determining the course of Alexander's early modern reception, there could be only one victor, so to speak, in this 1443 donation. Based on at least two centuries of interest in Christian and Stoic attacks on the conqueror, the transmission herein of such Latin sources on Alexander as the *Philippic Histories* and writers insistent on following these texts should have represented something of a crowning achievement for the medieval revival of Roman anxieties over absolute power. Duke Humfrey included, for example, Petrarch's *De viris illustribus*, a rare text in England and one that, in humanist fashion, attests both to an awareness of and a dissatisfaction with conflicting texts and traditions in Alexander's legacy. Petrarch criticizes the conqueror with a variety of charges against his immoral behaviour, and concluding Alexander's life, he scoffs at the admiration and forgiveness that the conqueror has elicited from otherwise sensible and authoritative writers:

Hic magni impetuosiue regis exitus fuit, quo sui illum perduxerunt mores: armis invictum vicit ebrietas. Quem miror scriptores quosdam nobiles et — quod est mirabilius — latinos, sui operas amore deceptos et quasi sortem iuvenis miseratos, non tantum excusare sed laudare etiam voluisse; qui indolem illam, magnitudinemque animi laboribus indefessam invictamque periculis, et liberalitatem ceterasque virtutes, quas alternas in eo fuisse non negaverim, nature sue, vitia vero virtutibus vel paria vel maiora, iram sevitiam ebrietatem libidinem superbiam vanitatem, fortune tribuunt atque etati.

This was the great and impetuous ruler's demise to which his character led him: drunkenness conquered the man unconquered by arms. I marvel that certain noble — and even more surprising, Latin — writers, deceived by their love of his deeds and, it would seem, mourning the fate of this young man, wished not only to excuse but also to praise him. They attribute the innate greatness of his spirit, unwearied by exertions and unconquered by dangers, and his liberality and some other virtues that I cannot deny he possessed to his nature; to Fortune and his age, however, they attribute his vices that were either equal to or greater than his virtues, namely his temper, severity, drunkenness, sexual desires, pride, and vanity.³⁷

³⁷ Petrarch, *De viris illustribus*, ed. by Martellotti, p. 68.

The 'Latin writers' in this accusation are his primary sources, Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories* and Curtius Rufus's *Historia Alexandri Magni*. While the former, despite its dogged attacks on Alexander concedes that he was 'vir supra humanam potentiam magnitudine animi praeditus' ('a man endowed with a greatness of spirit beyond human ability'),³⁸ Curtius Rufus concludes his own biography, discussed in the following chapter, with the praise and pity that Petrarch here reproaches. Petrarch intended his own Peripatetic stance on Alexander to show how quickly and thoroughly Fortune and earthly temptations corrupt the human mind, and by beginning his study of Alexander with the conquest of Persia, he leaves no doubt as to the origins of the conqueror's transformation into a despot. His very dissatisfaction with his Latin sources and with the continuing popularity of romances foretells the coming Renaissance reception of the conqueror, yet Petrarch's is truly a medieval attitude towards Alexander, in that his primary concerns (e.g., Alexander's pride, anger, and ego-mania) recall the severity of patristic and monastic writers. These earlier writers granted the Roman criticism of Alexander unrivalled historical authority, and Petrarch recognizes that even in such Roman histories of the conqueror there existed the possibility of understanding and even compassion for Alexander's faults and that if one considered his virtues, as Petrarch explains above, as inherent and his vices as the product of Fortune and youthful exuberance, then Alexander would not be considered a despicable tyrant. In the fifteenth century, as Greek accounts of Alexander also came to England via humanist circles, the classical tradition underwent a dramatic transformation because of this very argument that Petrarch condemns. The *Philippic Histories*, which he considers too lenient in its criticism, would be regarded as bombastic and inaccurate in comparison to these Greek texts, while Curtius Rufus, whose admiration for Alexander Petrarch reproaches, would accord with the tone of these newly circulating classics, would enjoy for the first time in English a wide readership.

To mingle clichés, it is not a case of criticism falling on deaf ears but of criticism crying in the wilderness that prevented Petrarch from wielding a significant influence (or at least as pervasive as Boccaccio's) on Alexander's English reception. Although Duke Humfrey and those who showed an early interest in Italian humanists knew the *De viris illustribus*,³⁹ it was the only major Petrarchan text that did not circulate widely in manuscripts or printed books

³⁸ Justin, *Epitoma historiarum Philippicarum*, ed. by Rühl and Seel, 12. 16.

³⁹ Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century*, p. 36, identifies John Whethamstede, Abbot of St Albans, as another owner of Petrarch's *De viris illustribus*.

in England.⁴⁰ While Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* became increasingly popular in the fifteenth century, due not only to Chaucer and Lydgate but also to the lavishly illuminated manuscripts produced for aristocratic and royal circles,⁴¹ Petrarch's account of famous men fell into relative obscurity, especially as another text from the 1443 donation soon eclipsed the classical sources on Alexander that had flourished in previous centuries. Foremost among the classics disseminated under Duke Humfrey and early patrons of humanism was Plutarch, whose *Parallel Lives* was the first Greek narrative of Alexander to reach English and one that initiated a new debate on the conqueror. Unlike the previous disagreement over the versions of the Alexander's life in history and romance that stretched back to the eleventh-century *Parva recapitulatio*, this new disagreement centred around conflicting attitudes among classical authorities, now both Greek and Roman.

The Humanists' Alexander: Plutarch's Parallel Lives

Alexander's Stoic critics, who had circulated in England for centuries because of their appeal for Christian thinkers, present the standard, medieval condemnatory view of the conqueror that up to the age of Lydgate and Duke Humfrey had informed the most influential historical texts on Macedon, including Orosius's *Historiae adversum paganos*, Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories*, and the multiple literary responses towards Alexander that they inspired.⁴² Ancient Stoics were not, to be sure, universally hostile towards Alexander, but the philosophers whose anecdotal attacks on the conqueror wielded the most influence in medieval England — not only the Stoic Seneca but the Peripatetic Cicero as well — and the unparalleled impact of the *Philippic Histories* established a pejorative philosophical tradition against Alexander. J. R. Fears has articulated the division of these philosophers' conceptions of Alexander by

⁴⁰ Mann, 'Petrarch Manuscripts in the British Isles', p. 142. Coogan, 'Petrarch's Latin Prose and the English Renaissance', p. 272 cites two incunabula of the *De viris illustribus*.

⁴¹ Backhouse, 'Founders of the Royal Library', pp. 24, 39, cites BL, MS Royal 14. E. v (Laurent du Premierfait's translation of the *De casibus*) as the largest one, weighing in at just under forty lbs., of the collection. For a survey of illuminated manuscripts of Boccaccio, see Reynolds, 'Illustrated Boccaccio Manuscripts in the British Library'.

⁴² Advocated by Seneca, this view also survived in numerous anecdotes and exempla, particularly from the twelfth century onward (see Chapter 4, p. 114), when his *Epistulae morales* were transmitted more widely among the monastic orders.

their respective responses to the politics of the Roman Empire: Cicero, the voice against tyranny in the first century BC, held contempt 'not for the historical Alexander but for the symbolic figure, the prototype of those who would destroy the Republic', and under Nero, Seneca and Lucan appropriated Alexander as a means of criticizing contemporary emperors.⁴³ The philosophical stance against the conqueror bequeathed to the Middle Ages was thus largely a product of Roman political concerns, although debate remains in modern scholarship. Richard Stoneman argues, for example, for a shifting Latin and Greek conception of Alexander simply 'along linguistic lines',⁴⁴ while A. B. Bosworth has advocated a division between Alexander's critics under Caesar and Nero and later Roman politicians and writers who regarded the Macedonian as 'a defender and emulator of the ideal Homeric kingship'.⁴⁵ Within a simple political context of Roman history, those who admitted Alexander's faults and articulated the anxieties of such unparalleled power (e.g., Seneca and the unabashedly antagonistic *Philippic Histories*) were the voices of the 'delicate' transitional period from the Republic to the Empire,⁴⁶ while those who glossed over his vices and lauded his military vision and global empire (e.g., the Greek Platonist Plutarch and the Greek Stoic Arrian) were the voices of Roman imperialism in the late first and early second century.⁴⁷ This ancient political context resulted, however, in a larger intellectual one of the medieval and early modern eras. In George Cary's assessment, the thriving tradition of the Roman Stoics owed much to Orosius, 'who carried the Stoic abuse of [Alexander] to its last extreme for the benefit of his Christian readers'.⁴⁸ Before Italian humanists translated Plutarch and Arrian into Latin, and before these translations were imported in turn by Duke Humfrey and other patrons of humanism, medieval readers in England had thus known the historical Alexander through the writers of the early Roman Empire and the patristic authors whom they influenced, especially Orosius. As a result, Alexander the despot — conceived because of philosophical and political anxieties over Roman emperors — long remained the only historical alternative to romance. When Duke Humfrey and the early generation of humanist patrons introduced Plutarch to England, however, they

⁴³ Fears, 'The Stoic View of the Career and Character of Alexander', pp. 120–21, 127.

⁴⁴ Stoneman, 'The Legacy of Alexander in Ancient Philosophy', p. 339.

⁴⁵ Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History*, I, 13.

⁴⁶ Zambrini, 'The Historians of Alexander the Great', p. 216.

⁴⁷ Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History*, I, 14.

⁴⁸ Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, p. 119.

introduced the later classical admiration for Alexander with him, an admiration that authors and readers there had not encountered before in ancient authorities. The effect of these 'new', primarily Greek classics on Alexander's reception thus signifies another nexus of medieval and early modern attitudes in Humfrey's collection.

If indeed Duke Humfrey's fellow early collectors of humanist and classical texts 'felt that their books should eventually contribute to the advancement of learning' and built 'libraries [that] should include works not available elsewhere in England',⁴⁹ then, in terms of Alexander's reception, no writer satisfied this agenda more than Plutarch. Between 1437, when John Whethamstede, Abbott of St Albans, is known to have received a copy of the *Parallel Lives* from Italy just a few years before his friend Duke Humfrey donated a copy to Oxford,⁵⁰ and 1570, when North's English translation was published, Plutarch's popularity among Alexander biographers and historians was unparalleled. To cite the earliest examples of his importation into England, William Grey, Bishop of Ely and avid collector of humanist and classical texts, commissioned in Florence a Latin copy of the *Lives* in the middle of the fifteenth century, and two later collectors, John Shirwood, onetime Chancellor of Exeter Cathedral, and John Russell, fellow of New College, Oxford, obtained copies of the 1478 Latin edition printed by Nicholas Jenson, one of six Latin incunabula published on the Continent.⁵¹ In the sixteenth century, the university and college libraries of Oxford and Cambridge owned several printed editions,⁵² and when Patrick Young compiled his catalogue of John Lumley's library (which included, of course, BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1), he recorded eight copies of the *Parallel Lives* in the original Greek and translations in Latin, Italian, and North's English

⁴⁹ Weiss, 'The Private Collector and the Revival of Greek Learning', p. 123.

⁵⁰ Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century*, p. 36.

⁵¹ For Gray, see Mynors, ed., *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College*, p. xxxi. Hunt and de la Mare, eds, *Duke Humfrey and English Humanism*, pp. 60–63, lists Shirwood and Russell's copies.

⁵² Ker, 'Lincoln College Election Lists', p. 480, records a copy from a 1543 list; Ker, 'Merton College Inventory 1556', p. 490 includes the complete works of Plutarch in Greek and Latin; and Ker, 'Books at Christ Church 1562–1602', p. 511 cites a Latin translation of the *Lives* printed in Basel in 1573. Clarke, ed., *The University and College Libraries of Cambridge*, p. 79 lists copies of the *Lives* in a 1557 inventory in the University Library, p. 164 lists a 1560 inventory for Clare College, and p. 410 lists a 1557 inventory for Pembroke College. Leedham-Green and McKitterick, 'A Catalogue of Cambridge University Library', pp. 181, 213 adds a printed Greek original and Latin translation.

version.⁵³ The *Lives* certainly attracted readers because of their emphasis on character — the ‘seemingly insignificant deeds, or speeches or even jests’ that, according to Walter Ullman, ‘was exactly the kind of stuff which stimulated and excited the men of the early humanist age at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries’⁵⁴ — and the allure of a Greek text suddenly available in translation surely boosted its popularity,⁵⁵ but these arguments must not diminish the importance of Plutarch’s actual narrative. His writings on Alexander, both in the *Parallel Lives* and the earlier moral essay *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander*, which few English collectors and readers seem to have known before Philemon Holland’s translation in 1603, represent, in fact, the birth of the conqueror’s reception as an idealized philosopher-king.

There is a certain level of irony in this term, given that Duke Humfrey commissioned Latin translations of Plato’s *Republic* and Aristotle’s *Politics*,⁵⁶ both of which define the tyrant in ways remarkably commensurate with the Roman version of Alexander that had dictated his English reception for centuries. As noted above, this earlier version was the result of concerns over absolute rule in the early Empire, and the idea that Alexander’s inherent vices plagued and ultimately truncated his career remained popular until the fifteenth century, when Plutarch became for English readers the first Greek apologist of Alexander. He could not deny Alexander’s faults and mistakes, the results of Fortune’s favour rather than a bad upbringing or character, yet he still chose to define the conqueror’s legacy by his virtues, notably his championing of philosophy. Since Roger Bacon translated the *Secretum secretorum* into Latin in the mid thirteenth century and promoted Alexander as a ruler who conquered the world because of the education imparted by Aristotle, the conqueror had signified for many writers the extraordinary powers of philosophy and its possibilities for a learned king. At the close of the fourteenth century, as argued in the previous chapter, Gower concluded that Alexander failed to adhere to Aristotle’s moral precepts and believed, in accordance with the Stoics, that ‘Alexander

⁵³ Jayne and Johnson, eds, *The Lumley Library: The Catalogue of 1609*, items 1369, 1371, 1376, 1378, 1392, 1394, 1402, 1421, 1422, and 1425.

⁵⁴ Ullman, *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism*, p. 162.

⁵⁵ Kibre, ‘The Intellectual Interests Reflected in Libraries of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries’, pp. 280–81, includes, for example, Plutarch among the first Greek writers to be transmitted in the fifteenth century.

⁵⁶ Summit, *Memory’s Library*, pp. 34–35, even argues that this translation of the *Republic* was the ‘linchpin of his collection’, and that its portrayal of the philosopher-king appealed to Humfrey as a ‘scholar-prince’.

conquered Darius and Babylon alike, but he could not overcome the evil inherent in his heart'.⁵⁷

Plutarch's popularity rendered this debate futile by contending that the conqueror, despite a few nasty moments due to his bad temper, exhibited near superhuman courage and ambition and his desire to unify 'Greek' and 'barbarous' cultures and to bring Greek civilization to the East designated Alexander an enlightened philosopher-king. For the first time, English readers encountered the argument that he based his military agenda on *homonoia*, the ideal of cultural harmony or unification, an argument that flared as recently as the mid twentieth century.⁵⁸ That Alexander's legacy transformed from that of a belligerent conqueror into the paradigm of philosophical training is apparent in the reactions of the early English patrons of humanism. John Free praised, for example, his employer John Tiptoft, the celebrated collector of humanist and classical texts, in a 1461 letter as a man whose virtue and eloquence merited comparison with the Greek and Roman emperors of old. Free's first example and representative of Greek culture is Alexander, who, he explains, loved philosophical doctrines more than wealth and opulence and who inspires him to enumerate the virtues of prudence, liberality, and piety in Tiptoft. Free especially praises the conqueror's 'magnitudo animi' ('greatness of spirit'), the same virtue that Petrarch reproaches in his classical sources on Alexander and that would become the definitive quality of Plutarch's biography of him.⁵⁹ This is not the opinion of Alexander expected from collectors of classical texts, at least based on the ones that had disseminated among previous generations of readers in England, and Free's remarks suggest the extent to which this classical Alexander had changed in the fifteenth century. The version of the conqueror's career known to humanist scholars and their patrons was not the same as that

⁵⁷ See above, Chapter 5, p. 145.

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Tarn, 'Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind'; and Badian, 'Alexander and the Unity of Mankind'.

⁵⁹ Weiss, 'A Letter-Preface of John Free to John Tiptoft', p. 103: 'quem virtute et eloquentia praestantissimis ipsis romanorum et graecorum imperatoribus comparare possimus! Atqui ut reliquos silentio transeam neque ingenio neque optimarum artium studio aut magno alexandro graeciae principi concedis [...]. Ille vero se fassus est ut ex epistola eius ad aristotilem comperit habemus caeteros doctrina antea maluisse quam copiis aut opulentiis' ('how I can compare you in virtue and eloquence to the most distinguished of the emperors of the Romans and Greeks! And if I may pass over the others in silence, you are inferior to Alexander the Great, ruler of Greece, neither in intellect nor in the study of the highest arts. Indeed he confessed — as I find in his letter to Aristotle — that he preferred to exceed others in learning than in riches and wealth').

transmitted within monastic circles, primarily because the Greek classics that humanism helped to re-establish in the Latin West presented a lenient view of Alexander. Plutarch's biography of the conqueror in his *Parallel Lives*, exceptionally popular in the fifteenth century, epitomizes this novel presentation of him as an educated and enlightened visionary.

Alexander's greatest fault in the *Parallel Lives* is seemingly his desire to prove himself worthy of his own legacy and empire. This does not repeat the misguided faith in earthly wealth and power that Christian writers since Augustine and Orosius had condemned but presents a nuanced portrait of an extraordinarily ambitious youth determined to seize control of Fortune. For Plutarch, Alexander's motivation conveys the nobility of his character. In the 1478 Latin translation printed by Nicholas Jenson in Venice, the version of the *Parallel Lives* that circulated among the humanist patrons influenced by Duke Humfrey, this attitude represents, in essence, a break with centuries' worth of patristic and monastic condemnation:

Non enim ipsum ulla illecebrarum aut pecuniae sed sola uirtutis ac gloriae cupido tenebat. Quoque maiores a patre facultates acciperet: eo se minora gesturum existimabat. Quocirca crescente dominio gerendarum rerum exhaustam sibi materiam ratus: non opes non deliciarum usus: uerum certamina & pugnas ardebat: & unde sibi gloriam compararet: principatum affectabat.

Indeed no desire for enticements or wealth, but only for virtue and glory, possessed him. He also thought that the greater the faculties he inherited from his father, the less there would be to achieve for himself. On account of this, he thought that the opportunity for actions necessary to increase his dominion was exhausted, and he did not enjoy riches or luxuries but for yearned for struggles and battles, and he strove for an empire in which he could partake in his own glory.⁶⁰

Late antique and medieval romances had long contextualized Alexander's life in sorcery and supernatural occurrences (e.g., Nectanabus fathered him through magic and deceit, and omens dictated both his death and his burial), and the Roman Stoic portrayal, favoured by the Benedictines in the narrative of the *Philippic Histories*, contextualized Alexander in a cycle of Macedonian murder and intrigue. In this text, he ascends the throne amidst suspicions that he and Olympias were involved in Philip's murder, he publicly promotes the Persian campaigns as one of vengeance, purges his ranks of his critical countrymen until he is killed by one in turn, and establishes a legacy of violence that ultimately rests on the 'apple of discord' that he casts among his survivors. In

⁶⁰ Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, II, fol. 338^r.

Plutarch's telling, Alexander's plans for building an empire represent a battle between individual will and Fortune, one that he had examined at length in *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander*, rather than a battle between the conqueror's moral character and the Macedonian lineage into which he is born and the attraction to the Persian lifestyle that he encounters in his campaigns. As his victories mount, this battle between will and Fortune turns to Alexander's favour, and the dictum of 'fortune favours the bold' informs the biography to the point that Plutarch explains that 'ast ille cum fortunam audacia uiresque uirtute superare studio gloriae niteretur: nihil fortibus indomitum' ('Alexander, in his desire for glory, strove to conquer fortune with boldness and strength with courage, and he thought that nothing was unconquerable for the strong').⁶¹

Surprisingly, this seeming arrogance deflects any prolonged examination of Alexander's well-known vices in favour of praising his nobler qualities. His hasty advances on the battlefield, for example, put his soldiers in danger but reflect his courage, and while his men yield to exhaustion and animosity, Alexander remains indefatigably fixed on his goal of bringing eastern realms under his authority. In a shocking rejection of the earlier charges that Seneca and Pompeius Trogus (the original author of the *Philippic Histories*) had raised against the conqueror, Plutarch praises his abstemiousness (stating that Alexander's overindulgence in wine, in particular, is exaggerated)⁶² and claims that the Macedonian army, not Alexander, falls prey to Persian luxury. Throughout Plutarch's study of Alexander's most important campaign, he depicts those around the conqueror as blindly led by their greed for wealth, sex, and decadence, while their leader indulges them to secure their loyalty and willingness to fight and patiently lectures them as though a parent to his children:

Suos postea delitiis ac illecebris omnino solutos sumptuosissimeque uiuentes animaduertens [...] Mirari se inquit eos tot tantisque confectis certaminibus haud meminisse: quod ipsis uictis longe mollius uictores dormiant: neque cernere se persarum moribus suos aequiparasse. Seruile quippe amare diuitias: at apprime regium insudare laboribus [...]. An ignoratis hunc esse uictoriae finem: ne hostium mores ac opera in nos transtulisse uideamur?

Afterwards he noticed that his men were completely unfettered by luxuries and enticements and living as extravagantly as possible [...] [and] he said that he marvelled that after having won so many and such great battles they did not remember

⁶¹ Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, II, fol. 349^v.

⁶² Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, II, fol. 342^r: 'Ad uinum quoque longe minus quam credebatur pronus' ('He also had a penchant for wine far less than is believed').

at all that victors sleep long and more soundly than the vanquished and that they did not realise they had made their own customs equal to those of the Persians. It is, of course, servile, [he told them], to love luxury but exceedingly kingly to sweat in toil [...]. Do you not know that the objective of victory is that we not seem to appropriate the customs and actions of our enemies?⁶³

The suggestion of Alexander's role as a philosopher-king underlies this passage, as passions do not guide him, and he is just as quick to lecture his men for their Persian manners as he is to accept their criticism. By his understanding of the human psyche and his patience, he 'regium esse affirmans: ut a quibus male audias: in eos magis sis beneficus' ('knows that as a king you must hear criticism from some of your men and be a benefactor all the more to them').⁶⁴

Here, Alexander not only possesses an indomitable spirit and a rational mind, but he also dispenses such philosophical maxims and becomes the embodiment of the *Secretum secretorum* tradition that many associated with him in the late Middle Ages. Even his worst crimes and most inexcusable behaviour deserve fair consideration, a reservation of judgment that no Roman writers of the early Empire (nor those influenced by them) would dare grant him. Plutarch relates that there are two possibilities for Alexander's adoption of Persian dress: 'siue ut probatis illorum legibus ipsos per quamdam sibi consuetudinem conciliaret' ('either so that, having approved of their laws, he might win them over through his adoption of their customs'), a testament to his political savvy, or because he wished to institute the practice of obeisance, formal bowing as though to a divinity, among his own men, a testament to his vanity.⁶⁵ Rather than asserting one reason over the other, Plutarch explains that the Persian dress

Quod quoque Macedonibus triste spectaculum esset: reliqui tamen eius uirtutem ingenti admiratione prosequentes quaedam illi ad uoluptatem gloriamue concedenda existimabant.

was also a sorrowful spectacle to the Macedonians, but some extolled his virtue with great admiration, and they thought that they should concede to him certain things that made him happy or added to his glory.⁶⁶

⁶³ Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, II, fol. 346^r.

⁶⁴ Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, II, fol. 347^r.

⁶⁵ Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, II, fol. 347^r.

⁶⁶ Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, II, fol. 347^r.

What serves the *Philippic Histories*, also included in Duke Humfrey's 1443 donation to Oxford, as a key moment in Alexander's eastern transformation becomes for Plutarch proof of the Macedonians' loyalty to their leader. He even applies such fair-mindedness to two of the most damning controversies of Alexander's despotic behaviour in the *Philippic Histories* and for Seneca as well, the murders of the general Clitus and the philosopher Callisthenes. The first acts as the most vociferous critic of Alexander's favour towards the Persians, but the conqueror's violent reaction in spearing his elderly general and then succumbing to grief and madness reflects an episode that Plutarch defines simply by Alexander's 'infoelicitas' ('misfortune'), not any premeditation, because he was prone to anger and intoxication, and Clitus simply created a dangerous environment.⁶⁷ Callisthenes, too, criticizes Alexander and advises him to abandon the policy of enforced bowing, an admirable defiance in Plutarch's telling:

Quare cum illum adorandi morem auertisset: effectum est: ut magna quidem graecos: maiori autem Alexandrum infamia liberauit: sibi perniciem comperans ui magis quam persuasione regem absterre conatus.

So when he rejected the custom of showing Alexander adoration, this was the outcome: he freed the Greeks from great infamy indeed, but Alexander from a still greater one. Attempting to deter the king by force rather than persuasion, he brought harm upon himself.⁶⁸

In the *Fall of Princes*, another text associated with Duke Humfrey, Lydgate presents Callisthenes as a cautionary tale. Fortune graces him with the intellect to be one of Aristotle's most promising pupils, but she brings about his demise through a fellow pupil, Alexander, whom luxury and drunkenness have rendered a prime example of the mutability of kings. For Plutarch, Callisthenes is also a martyr, but one who shares responsibility for his death. Alexander's outrageous reaction (having the philosopher dismembered) becomes peripheral to the narrative, and what remains is a moral victory for Callisthenes, overshadowed by his questionable approach towards Alexander's behaviour and his execution.

⁶⁷ Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, II, fol. 348^r: 'non regis consilio sed infoelicitate perpetratum inueniet. Cum per iram ac ebrietatem suo fato Clytus materiam occasionemque praeberuit' ('[the reader] will find that [this murder] was perpetrated not through the king's design but his misfortune, for since Alexander was angry and inebriated, Clitus offered the cause and occasion for his own fate').

⁶⁸ Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, II, fol. 348^v.

Such forgiveness largely defines Plutarch's study of Alexander, even though there remain polarizing moments between Alexander and his men: he pushes them past their fighting capabilities, and his training of an elite Persian guard especially irks the Macedonian veterans, but the conclusion in the *Philippic Histories* that the Persians wept when Alexander died, while his countrymen cursed his name and breathed a sigh of relief is unthinkable in Plutarch's biography. Alexander's ambition, courage, and kind disposition towards his men imbue him with a certain idealism that contrasts with the Roman writers in circulation before the fifteenth century. By rejecting the notion that Alexander devolved into an eastern tyrant who provoked fear and paranoia across his empire, Plutarch refutes the infamous circumstances of the conqueror's death, relates that the rumours about Alexander's poisoning only arose in the years following his death, and dismisses the story as fiction.⁶⁹ Since the early Roman Empire, the Latin West had promulgated Antipater's treachery as the cause of Alexander's death, and whether as a justified ending for so belligerent a conqueror (the view of Christian historiographers) or a cause for lament (the view of romances), it remained accepted historical fact for approximately 1500 years. Now, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the claims of Greek writers began to challenge that history.⁷⁰

Discrediting the poisoning plot from Alexander's legend was no mere matter of detail. Classical Latin histories and then late antique Greek and Latin romances had long maintained that while surveying his enormous empire Alexander was poisoned in Babylon: the first texts insist that he had upset so many in his ranks that Antipater, the ringleader of the plot, acted amidst widespread distrust, and the second insist that Antipater, the foul agent of treachery, killed history's most heroic king. Historical texts appropriated the story of Alexander's poisoning as a warning against tyranny, while romances did so to emphasize the tragedy apparent in the loss of a beloved hero. While Chaucer's Monk repeated this latter view, several fourteenth- and fifteenth-century writers, including Petrarch, Boccaccio, Gower, and Lydgate had explored Alexander's vices and mistakes as the causes of so ignoble a death. With the influence of Plutarch, a new, less provocative version of his demise circum-

⁶⁹ Plutarch, *Vitae parallelae*, II, fol. 352^v: 'Quidam ficta prorsus esse: quae de ueneni potione dicuntur: affirmant' ('Certain writers further assert that these stories reporting that Alexander [died] from a poisoned drink are fiction').

⁷⁰ Although by 1488 John Skelton had translated the first five books of Diodorus Siculus's *Bibliotheca historica* (*The Library of History*) from the Latin version of Poggio Bracciolini, the original account of the Macedonian Empire is found in Books XVI–XX.

vented any genuine consideration of the conqueror's tyrannical nature or the murderous ambition of his successors, and both of these aspects became relics of medieval historiographical sensibilities. In the transmission of Plutarch, a novel ideology was established, one based not on a moral reflection of the reasons for Alexander's failure, the earlier impetus behind the *Fall of Princes*, but on a celebration of what he accomplished and the promise that his success could not simply be emulated (as promoted long before in the *Secretum secretorum*). In the age of humanism, Alexander's success could even be surpassed.

ROYAL LIBRARIES AND THE LUMLEY COLLECTION

In the generations after early English humanists reintroduced Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* to the canon of available Alexander texts, the conqueror's reception reached a critical junction. The sixteenth century was another age of the vernacularization of Alexander, as the Latin and Greek biographies that had yet to reach England exerted at last an influence on the popular conception of him. Romances had long entertained with fantastical tales of the East and Alexander's exploits, but by the end of this century and the beginning of the seventeenth, all of the classical narratives of the conqueror and his empire known today were available in the English language. These Latin and Greek texts were translated, printed, and sold in an era distinguished by the sensibility of the Renaissance, and many aristocratic and royal readers grew particularly enamoured with the prospect of surpassing Alexander's accomplishments. They may not have known romances, which had fallen further out of favour, as intimately as their predecessors, but these readers hardly needed such apocryphal texts to foster an admiration for Alexander. The reception of Plutarch had initiated the recovery of the Greek Alexander and its insistence on forgiving his faults and praising his virtues, a process that would be completed by English translators in the second half of the sixteenth century. At the same time, this period of rendering classical sources into English for publication reintroduced earlier Roman Alexander narratives, and despite the antagonism that characterizes the study of Macedon in the *Philippic Histories*, such an attitude was muted by scholars and a reading public who saw in Alexander the pinnacle of ambition and achievement. Their tastes were not only shaped by Greek attitudes towards

the conqueror, however, for the first Latin text to be translated and to inform sixteenth-century perceptions of him was Curtius Rufus's *Historia Alexandri Magni*, the most lenient of any Augustan-era stance on Alexander.

Vasco da Lucena and Curtius Rufus

That Curtius Rufus's *Historia Alexandri Magni* became a 'mirror' in which kings could both compare themselves to Alexander and find inspiration for mimicking his deeds is first evident in the version produced by the Portuguese scholar Vasco da Lucena for Charles the Bold in the 1460s. His translation, which both enjoyed the popularity of Alexander romances and sought to appropriate a historically accurate portrayal of the conqueror as a manual of kingship, has a twofold agenda: to present an Alexander devoid of the legends of romance and one whose career could demonstrate to a modern ruler the causes both for praise and anxiety. Although Vasco has the reputation of being an early modern standard bearer of the 'true' and historical Alexander (rather than the exaggerated one of romance), a tradition of distinguishing the two had, as this study has argued throughout, existed for several generations in England. His methodology in translating Curtius Rufus recalls, in fact, the *Parva recapitulatio* of the eleventh century, as Vasco explains in his prologue:

Et pource que aucuns pourroient blasmer mon labeur comme superflu, disans que on treuve ces histoires en fransçois, en rime ou en prose, en six our sept manieres, je respons qu'il est vray, mais corrompues, changees, faulces et plaines de evidens mensonges.

So that no one can accuse my work of being superfluous and say that histories in French verse or prose, in six or seven [versions], are to found, I respond that this is true, but these histories are corrupted, altered, false, and full of what are clearly lies.¹

While Vasco's concern for finding historical authority and correcting the falsehoods of romance continues a long-standing investigation into the Alexander legend, his desire for a classical source decidedly represents fifteenth-century attitudes towards the conqueror. Recognizing the need to fill the infamous lacunae of Curtius Rufus's *Historia*, he explains the range of 'acteurs autentiques' whom he has consulted, including Plutarch, Josephus Flavius's *Jewish Antiquities*, and Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories*, on which, by his own

¹ Bossuat, 'Vasque de Lucene', p. 212.

admission, he relies the most and which ‘ne differe d’icelui que ou stile’ (‘differs from [Curtius Rufus] only in style’).²

Like Duke Humfrey’s library, Vasco’s list of sources reveals a fifteenth-century amalgam of medieval monastic and humanist reading interests. Long before, Josephus had informed the *Parva recapitulatio* and Justin the *St Albans Compilation*, and Plutarch had just gained an immense popularity after his circulation in Latin translations among the early English patrons of humanism. Vasco demonstrates, however, that the search for accurate histories of Alexander followed upon the revival of appropriating the conqueror for the “Mirror-for-Princes” tradition.³ As discussed in the previous chapter, Plutarch’s insistence on Alexander’s ambition and courage as virtues that outshine his faults gave new life to his promotion as a political model, and the increased availability of Curtius Rufus’s biography only strengthened this view. Still, there remained the other classical Roman narratives (not to mention Christian ones) that insisted on Alexander’s inherent vices and tyrannical behaviour, and Vasco’s prologue reveals his conflict over glorifying the conqueror for his patrons. He justifies his translation of a text useful for two reasons beyond historical accuracy: as a mortal man, Alexander may have been susceptible to the most destructive vices that accompany constant success, but he still conquered the Orient and established a glorious empire. Alexander thus offers the most effective exemplum from the ancient world, but only if one rejects the legends about his life and heeds his disreputable behaviour as a cautionary tale of power and corruption. Vasco suggests to Charles, for example, that he should consider the areas in which he exceeds Alexander and pay attention to the more disconcerting aspects of the conqueror’s career:

car ainsy comme en toutes autres vertus de paix, de guere, vous, mon tres redoubté seigneur, pas n’estes gaires surmonté d’Alexandre, ainsy en devocion, continence, chasteté et attemprance l’avez surmonté evidamment, tellement certes que icelui Alexandre pas ne vous doit estre exemple de vertus, mais, se faire se pouoit qu’il retournast en nostre siecle, vous, mon tres redoubté seigneur, deveriez estre exemple d’Alexandre [...] vous y pourrez veoir et en veant eviter les fourvois qui tournerent a declin et decheance les grans biens d’Alexandre et qui mirent tache et souillure a sa longue felicité.

Because, then, in all other virtues of peace and war, you, my most reverend lord, are hardly surpassed by Alexander, and since you clearly surpass him in such virtues as devotion, continence, chastity, and temperance, it is a certainty that this Alexander

² Bossuat, ‘Vasque de Lucene’, p. 212.

cannot offer you an example of virtue, but, were he able to make his return to our century, you would become an example for Alexander [...] you will be able to see [in my history] the mistakes that turned Alexander's great fortunes towards his decline and fall and which stained and sullied his long-lasting happiness.³

In a clever twist of the two debates regarding Alexander's career — whether or not all of his deeds were credible and whether or not his vices denigrated his overall character — Vasco uses both to encourage Charles. A wariness of success and corruption is the obvious intent of the passage above, but when Vasco returns to the question of history and romance, he urges Charles to consider how Alexander conquered the East without the aid of flying or diving machines or even the strength of the famed heroes of chivalric romance but accomplished so much '*avec gens de telz forces que nous sommes aujourd'hui*' ('with men of such strength as we have today').⁴ By remaining virtuous and exhibiting strong leadership, anyone can mimic Alexander's heroics and, it would seem, repeat his conquest of exotic lands. Vasco even considers Charles's Burgundian ancestors as '*Alexandres de leurs temps*' ('Alexanders of their times'), particularly his father Philip the Good, whose valour and magnanimity set his reputation above that of the Macedonian.⁵ He presents the conqueror with the stipulation that no one can deny his military accomplishments, but one must understand, too, how these accomplishments ultimately corrupted him, and Alexander thus offers a paradigm of how to rule and how not to comport oneself, an attitude towards Curtius Rufus and the conqueror himself that Vasco's readers did not always share.

Although all of the surviving manuscripts of Vasco's translation were produced on the Continent, they disseminated widely and ushered in a gilded (literally, in the case of the marvellously illuminated manuscripts of the work) age of admiring Alexander not through the fallacies of romance but the historical reality of his victories. The popularity of Vasco's text coincides with the rising number of vernacular and Latin translations of Greek narratives of Alexander, and it undoubtedly introduced Curtius Rufus to a wider audience, but it also appealed to contemporary tastes for the romance-inspired, chivalrous portrayal of Alexander among English royalty. As Scot McKendrick has noted, 'medieval representations of Alexander [...] derive their subjects from the Alexander Romance and not the historical texts of Diodorus, Pompeius Trogus, Plutarch,

³ Bossuat, '*Vasque de Lucene*', p. 211.

⁴ Bossuat, '*Vasque de Lucene*', p. 213.

⁵ Bossuat, '*Vasque de Lucene*', p. 213.

Arrian, and Curtius',⁶ and this long-standing influence on the artists who illuminated Vasco's translation is apparent in the images of the adventurous knight and king that fill manuscripts intended for a royal audience. Vasco's decision to emphasize Alexander's virtues thus accorded with, and likely helped to inspired, Edward IV's fondness for romance, which was informed in turn by his exile of 1470–71.⁷ Staying at the library of Seigneur de Gruuthuse, whom he visited that year in Bruges, Edward had access to a copy of Vasco's translation, a particular favourite in his family that he, his sister Margaret of York, and her husband Charles the Bold would all come to own.⁸ Edward also owned a copy of the *Secretum secretorum*, and although Vasco's suggestion to recall Alexander's faults while reading and viewing his military achievements may have been lost on him, Vasco's insistence on reading his translation and considering how to imitate and surpass Alexander surely was not.⁹ This taste for romances of ancient heroes later led Edward to consider chivalry as 'a means of establishing a greater England and obliterating the dishonour of the defeat in France and the ensuing civil war',¹⁰ and he can hardly have found a nobler hero for military exploits than Alexander. The disparity between Alexander's critics and admirers in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century was so great that, as recently suggested, young men like Charles the Bold and Richard III, reared on Alexander romances, would not have understood the moral stance that some humanists maintained against Alexander — in this case, Erasmus, who warned 'that boys should take an "antidote" before they read about such "tyrants"' as the Macedonian conqueror.¹¹

The popularity of lavishly produced Alexander romances and the ideology expressed by early modern translators regarding their classical sources surely

⁶ McKendrick, *The History of Alexander the Great*, p. 8.

⁷ Kekewich, 'Edward IV, William Caxton, and Literary Patronage', pp. 481–82. For a survey of the debate, see Carley, ed., *The Libraries of King Henry VIII*, pp. xxiv–xxv.

⁸ Carley, ed., *The Libraries of King Henry VIII*, p. 13 suggests that the copy of Vasco in the Westminster inventory is now either BL, MS Royal 20. C. iii or BL, MS Royal 15. D. iv (given by Margaret of York to Catherine of Aragon), although he acknowledges the item's association with other modern manuscripts. For the history of Margaret's copy, see 'The Library of Margaret of York and Some Related Books', in Kren, ed., *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and the Visions of Tondal*, p. 262.

⁹ Carley, ed., *The Libraries of King Henry VIII*, p. 160, identifies the copy of the *Secretum secretorum* as BL, MS Royal 12. E. xv.

¹⁰ Kekewich, 'Edward IV, William Caxton, and Literary Patronage', p. 481.

¹¹ Carley, ed., *The Libraries of King Henry VIII*, p. 112, n. 37.

informed this fascination with seeing in the conqueror a political paradigm worthy of imitation, despite the anxieties of scholars like Erasmus. Under the Tudors, this interest in the heroic Alexander hardly waned, as the opportunities for reading about his career increased dramatically, owing especially to the English translations discussed below.¹² The distinction between the Alexander books collected by Edward IV and brought to Richmond Palace by Henry VII and those recorded for Henry VIII in a 1542 Westminster inventory illustrates the considerable changes underway.¹³ This list covers an impressive range of classical, medieval, and early modern treatments of the conqueror, including Walter of Châtillon's twelfth-century epic *Alexandreis*, another copy of the Old French prose Alexander romance that Edward owned (BL, MS Royal, 20 B. xx), a French translation (printed in Paris, 1530) of Diodorus Siculus's *Bibliotheca historica*, Books XVIII–XX, which cover the wars of Alexander's successors, two versions of Orosius (a French translation printed in Paris, 1491 and a thirteenth-century manuscript, BL, MS Royal, 13 A. xx, of English origin), a Latin copy of Curtius Rufus's biography (a fifteenth-century Florentine manuscript, now Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Auct. F. 2. 25), and the Valerius *Epitome* (an early-fourteenth-century Dominican copy), the Latin romance that had inspired the *Parva recapitulatio* to challenge apocryphal tales of Alexander centuries earlier.¹⁴ This Westminster list also sheds light on a number of aspects of Alexander's reception, particularly within the contexts of the collections that mark the beginning of the humanist perspective on the conqueror (that of Duke Humfrey) and its culmination at the end of the sixteenth century (that of John Lumley, appropriated by James I and Prince Henry in 1609). The Royal books, in Henry's reign as now, offer a consolidation of every intellectual movement's response towards Alexander discussed thus far, including, in the 1542 Westminster list, the patristic attacks on him (Orosius), the Latin romance cast into doubt by the *Parva recapitulatio* (the Valerius *Epitome*), the origin of the "Mirror-for-Princes" genre' in scholasticism (the *Secretum secretorum*, as well as another scholastic favourite in the *Alexandreis*), the *de casibus*

¹² Carley, *The Books of King Henry VIII and his Wives*, p. 41, describes, for example, the tastes of Henry VII, who 'favoured histories and other works suitable to the edification of a noble and wise prince'.

¹³ Carley, ed., *The Libraries of King Henry VIII*, p. 3 identifies the Richmond collection as 'no doubt primarily French in its constitution'; it was comprised of books collected by Edward IV after his exile of 1470–71 and printed books acquired by Henry VII.

¹⁴ Carley, ed., *The Libraries of King Henry VIII*, pp. 12, 13, 23–24, 46, 76, 77, 89, 91, 97, 127, and 160.

tragedy (Laurent's version of Boccaccio), and the vernacular translation of histories and romances popular in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century (the *Old French Prose Alexander*, Vasco's Curtius Rufus, and the French version of Diodorus Siculus). With the depth and breadth of the books recorded in the Westminster library, due in large part to previous royal and monastic owners, Henry could read about the conqueror in a progressive fashion in the growing number of classical histories and biographies, yet he could also read about him in a traditional fashion in romances that glorified Alexander, in the Christian condemnation of him, and in the discussion of his empire in terms of Fortune and *casus*.

Amidst all of these perspectives, Henry was also the recipient of the humanist treatment of Alexander for the purposes of royal education. In his *Institutio principis christiani* of 1516, originally written for the future Charles V but rededicated to Henry VIII in 1517, Erasmus asserts a clear distinction between Christian princes and men like Alexander and Julius Caesar:

what greater madness could there be than for a man who has received the Christian sacraments to model himself on Alexander, Julius Caesar, or Xerxes, whose lives even the pagan writers criticized (or those of them who had some degree of judgment)? Just as it would be an utter disgrace to be surpassed by them in any of their good actions, so for a Christian prince to want to copy them completely would be sheer insanity.¹⁵

Humanist tutors, including Erasmus, knew that their royal wards heeded not the warnings inherent in the classical Alexander (and, to be sure, the more critical ones were largely ignored by the sixteenth century) but remained attracted to the 'chivalric ethos' that had promulgated his legend among readers like Charles the Bold and Edward IV.¹⁶ However, the humanist response towards this ethos only heightened the general praise for Alexander. In order to transform him from a figure of martial glory to one of prudent governance and learning based on education and experience, one had to extract the conqueror from medieval romance and resituate him in classical histories.¹⁷ In essence, Alexander was not to be regarded as a ruler who fought countless wars for the sake of personal glory or adventure (as in the romance tradition) but

¹⁵ Erasmus, *A Complaint of Peace Spurned*, trans. by Radice, p. 252.

¹⁶ Tracy, *The Politics of Erasmus*, p. 59, identifies this humanist pedagogical approach to Alexander in the writings of Guillaume Budé, whose *De l'institution du prince* was published in 1519.

¹⁷ Tracy, *The Politics of Erasmus*, p. 60.

as one who sought to unite disparate cultures under Greek civilization, defeat forces of evil, and rule under the guidance of his philosophical education. This resulted in a humanist recreation of the conqueror, and as Alexander soon evolved into a paradigm of enlightened kingship, a fit subject for an education that had originally urged Christian rulers towards ‘personifying virtue, governing with moderation and ruling for the common good’.¹⁸ Although Erasmus had never wished to exonerate Alexander of his destructive behaviour and vanity, and indeed had never promoted him as a proper model of rulership, he still admired the conqueror’s compassion for Darius’s family and his adoption of Persian customs.¹⁹ The fruits of these humanist labours led both to the widespread translation of classical source texts, especially later Roman ones like that of Plutarch, who cast Alexander as the philosopher-king worthy of contemporary admiration, and Curtius Rufus, who could not bring himself to condemn the conqueror distinguished by such noble qualities.

When John Brende rendered Curtius Rufus into English in 1553, for example, he followed Vasco in producing what he considered a ‘work [that] would be useful and instructive [...] and set an example of manly virtue’,²⁰ and his work, *The historie of Quintus Curcius*, epitomizes Alexander’s reception in the mid sixteenth century. Brende introduces his translation by exhorting the Duke of Northumberland to consider the importance of history for princes (thereby contextualizing Curtius Rufus within the “Mirror-for-Princes” tradition, analogous to the contemporary *A Mirror for Magistrates*), for it demonstrates how the virtuous:

prospered so long as they mainteyned iustice, persecutd vice, vsed clemencye and mercye, were liberal, religyous, vertuous, and voyde of covetousnes. And contrariwise, howe they fell into manifold calamities, miseries, and troubles, when they embraced vyce and forsoke vertue.²¹

For Brende, neither vices nor the resultant ‘calamities, miseries, and troubles’ play a role in Alexander’s legacy. His vision of the conqueror rather evokes the ideology of the *Secretum secretorum* and perpetuates the myth of Alexander as the philosopher-king taught by Aristotle, the devoted reader of Homer, and

¹⁸ Pollnitz, ‘Humanism and the Education of Henry, Prince of Wales,’ p. 22.

¹⁹ Tracy, *The Politics of Erasmus*, p. 290.

²⁰ Bennett, *English Books and Readers: 1475–1557*, I, 134. As Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III’s Books*, pp. 106–07, argue, this was the general reception of Curtius Rufus’s biography.

²¹ Rufus, *Historie*, trans. by Brende, p. A.ii.

thus the victor of the known world.²² Brende also conflates the traditional medieval argument that Alexander's success was preordained by God, as his career is recounted in 1 Maccabees and foreseen in Daniel, with the possibilities for lionizing the conqueror posed by the newly circulating Greek sources on Macedon. He brings his introduction to a close by citing Arrian, a rare author in mid-sixteenth-century England but one clearly worthy of mention in Brende's work alongside the other authorities on Alexander, including the Old Testament, the *Philippic Histories*, and, of course, Curtius Rufus, known to the translator. Arrian's portrayal of Alexander, along with that of Plutarch, was already surpassing their Latin counterparts in influence, and Brende's attitudes conveyed below reflect this transition:

For Arianus writeth of hym that he was of a semelie stature, bolde in his enterprises, stowte of stomach, moderate in pleasures, wise in counsaile, and provident to forsee thynges. That he was excellent in conductyng of an armye, moste politique in orderyng hys battailles, that he could encourage his souldiers wyth apt wordes, and when neade requyred take part of their peril.²³

According to this laudatory passage, later ages should not even admit to Alexander's faults. This praise, especially as summarized from Arrian, presents a selective reading of Alexander's legacy and suggests the manners in which Greek texts were reshaping the debate over his virtues and vices. Although Brende, like Vasco, is aware that vices lead to political disasters, he does not follow the earlier translator in attributing to Alexander such a causal relationship between moral behaviour and deteriorating kingship.

Such an attitude required that Brende conveniently overlook many episodes in Curtius Rufus's biography, but Curtius's own conclusions on the conqueror reveal why he became an influential source at the time. As his Peripatetic stance claims that Fortune and success led to Alexander's vices (rather than that he was inherently flawed), Curtius Rufus's anxieties over power and corruption dictate his account of the conqueror's ascendancy. As does the *Philippic Histories*, Curtius Rufus's *Historia* isolates the origins of Alexander's descent into tyranny in his conquest of Persia, where his compassion for his new subjects, particularly the royal family, and his desire to impart the wealth of this eastern victory to his men attest to Alexander's inherently noble nature. His growing authority

²² Rufus, *Historie*, trans. by Brende, p. A.ii relates, for example, that the education instilled by Aristotle led Alexander (in a well-known anecdote) to sleep with a volume of Homer under his pillow, 'wherby he myght be admonished of the vertues and offyce of an excellent prynce'.

²³ Rufus, *Historie*, trans. by Brende, p. A.ii.

and journey further into foreign lands transform the Macedonian, per Roman historiographical tradition, and after an initial period of sharing the glory of conquest with his men, the conqueror's degradation elicits Curtius Rufus's commentary:

which his humilitie and constincie of mind if he had continually observed to his latter dayes, he might have been thought much more happier then he was, when that he havynge subdued all Asia from Hellespont to the Ocean sea, did counterfeite the triumphes of Bacchus. Or if that emonges the reste of his conquestes, he would have laboured to conquer his pride and his yre, beyng vices invincible. Or if in his drokennes he would have abstayned from the slaughter of his nobilitye, and not to have put to death those excellent men of warre without iudgment which helped him to conquer so many nacions. But at this tyme the greatnes of his fortune had not yet altered his nature, though afterwards he could not bear his victories with that vertue he did winne them.²⁴

Typical of Curtius Rufus's biography, this battle between Alexander and Fortune serves as a reflection of the actual campaigns that he leads from Macedon to India. The initial victories are due to Fortune, but so, too, is Alexander's devolution from an idealistic, courageous leader to the prideful madman described above. Again as in the *Philippic Histories*, Alexander's most egregious changes are both psychological and driven by decadence, as luxurious living and an indomitable arrogance in his conquests lead him to a paranoid distrust of his men (hence his murder of Clitus and Callisthenes and fear of rebellion) that mirrors his new Persian mode of dress and behaviour. For Curtius Rufus, Persia represents a lack of restraint and rationality and a land in which Alexander's suddenly immoral behaviour and dissatisfaction with his heritage irrevocably isolates him from his soldiers.²⁵

The swiftness with which Alexander yields to thoughts of luxury and faith in his own divinity and with which his men forgive his temporary madness also play central roles in the *Historia*. Like Plutarch, Curtius Rufus presents the biography of a man corrupted by Fortune, not the bloody history of the Macedonian people, so that his narrative starkly disagrees with the theme and

²⁴ Rufus, *Historie*, trans. by Brende, p. E.iii.

²⁵ Rufus, *Historie*, trans. by Brende, e.g. p. P.iii: 'There he turned his continencye and moderacion (being the moste excellent vertues appearing in eny kynde of estate) into pryde and voluptuousnesse, not esteamyng hys countrey customes nor the holsome temperaunce that was in the usages and discipline of the kynges of Macedon. For he judged their civill usage and maner to be over base for his greatnes, but did counterfeite the heyghte and pompe of the kynges of Perce, representing the greatnes of the Goddes'.

tone of the other Latin source known to late medieval and early modern readers, Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories*. The point of this latter text — that Alexander, like his grandparents, parents, and successors, was a murderous criminal who never earned the forgiveness of his men — does not interest Curtius Rufus, at least in the fragmentary state in which his text survives. Here, both the author and the Macedonian soldiers regret Alexander's disgraceful behaviour after his death in Babylon, but they remember him fondly for all that he accomplished beyond other kings and conquerors. Curtius Rufus claims that the army mourns Alexander to such an extent that they regret not having paid him the divine honours on which he insisted, and they certainly understand the political troubles that await an empire without its leader. Curtius Rufus himself recognizes Alexander's divisive legacy but offers an articulate and forgiving Peripatetic solution:

Consideryng Alexander rightwislye, we must impute all his vertues to his owne nature, and his vices either to hys youth, or to the greatnes of his fortune. There was in him an incredible force of courage, and an exceedyng sufferauce of tra-vaile. He was endured with manhode, excellenge not onely emonges kynges: but also emonges such as had no other vertue nor qualitye. He was of suche liberalitie that oftentymes he gave greater thinges, then the receyvers could have wysshed for of God. The multitud of kyngdomes that he he gave in gift, and restored to such from whom he had taken them by force, was a token of his clemencie towards them that he subdued. He shewed a perpetuall contempte of deathe, the feare wherof doth amase other men. And as there was in him a greater defire of glory and worldely prayse them reason would beare: so was it tollerable in so young a man, enterprisyng so great and notable actes.²⁶

As does Plutarch, Curtius Rufus insists that these military virtues and moral character, further evidenced by Alexander's devotion to his parents, kindness towards his soldiers, wisdom, and sexual restraint, were part and parcel of his natural nobility. As a young man, he proved himself worthy of glory, but his youth, not his nature, made him susceptible to Fortune's influence. That he thought himself a god, lashed out against those who refused to accept him as such, and appropriated Persian dress and customs were all due to Fortune's extraordinary favour of so young a conqueror.

Had Alexander lived a longer life, Curtius Rufus concludes, he may have learned to overcome the goddess's influence:

²⁶ Rufus, *Historie*, trans. by Brende, p. Gg.iii.

As the heate of youthe stirred him to anger, and to the desyre of drynkyng: so age might have mytigated againe those faultes. Not withstanding it must nedes be confessyd, that though he prevailed muche by his vertue, yet ought he to impute more unto his fortune, which only of al mortal men, he had in his owne power. Howe often did she deliver him from the poynte of death? Howe often did she defende him wyth perpetuall felicitye, when he hadde rashelye brought him selfe in peryll? And when she poynted an ende to his glorye, she even then was contente to finyshe his life staiynge his fatall destenye tyll he ha[d] subdued the Orient, visited the Ocean Sea, and fulfilled all that mans mortalitie was able to perfourme.²⁷

This Augustan-era perspective that Brende here conveys to a sixteenth-century readership sits awkwardly between prevailing medieval and early modern views. Curtius Rufus's argument that Fortune showed a certain mercy in ending Alexander's career only after he had achieved so much glory subverts the traditional medieval notion, especially in romance, that Alexander died at the height of his power, before he could realise the glory of which he was fully capable. At the same time, it does not accord with the burgeoning sixteenth- and seventeenth-century reception of Alexander as a ruler capable of controlling his destiny and denying Fortune's ability to grant him successes or impose on him failures. Within the context of classical histories, Curtius Rufus's portrayal of Alexander's corruption in Persia and role in his own downfall is certainly more antagonistic than the later narratives of Plutarch and Arrian, but in a medieval context this charge pales in comparison to the *Philippic Histories*, the alternative Latin history of Alexander, with its survey of criminality in both the conqueror and the entire history of his empire. When Curtius Rufus and the Greek narratives of Alexander eclipsed this more condemnatory version in the late fifteenth and sixteenth century, they all seemed relatively forgiving, and, as seen in the passage above and especially in Plutarch, even compassionate with regards to Alexander's faults.

Translating the Classical Alexander in the Sixteenth Century

The admiring attitudes of the sixteenth century are further reflected in the earliest English translations of these Latin and Greek sources for ancient Macedon. While these translations, from Brende's Curtius Rufus in 1553 to Philemon Holland's version of Plutarch's *Moralia* in 1603, present the texts therein as mirrors of virtues and vices, none explicitly condemn immoral behaviour in

²⁷ Rufus, *Historie*, trans. by Brende, p. Gg.iii.

Alexander, and indeed many praise him as the paragon of noble kingship before presenting a narrative that at least raises questions about such prestige. These translations generally review the same disagreements over individual merit and fate that Gower and Lydgate had long before resolved by blaming Alexander for bringing about his demise by ill-advised rule and immoral behaviour, respectively. Amidst the conqueror's warm sixteenth-century reception and the extolling of his virtues to the point of expurgating his vices in his appropriation as a political model, his culpability would have seemed a non-sequitur for many readers. Even Arthur Golding's translation of the *Philippic Histories*, the harshest classical record of ancient Macedon available and one that explicitly presents punishment for the ambition and corruption not only of Alexander but of his predecessors and successors as well, fails to address Alexander in its dedication. Golding's definition of vice as meriting 'miseries, calamities, shames and punishmentes' and 'endlesse reproch and infamie after death' has a particular relevance for Alexander and his empire,²⁸ yet his only reference to the conqueror in the dedication is that he so loved reading 'history' that he slept with the *Iliad* under his pillow and struck a schoolmaster for not supplying his students with the works of Homer.²⁹

Five years later, Thomas Stocker, in his translation of Books XVIII–XIX of Diodorus Siculus's *Bibliotheca historica* (from the French version of Claude de Sesseil) even exonerates Alexander's successors from any culpability in the events following their leader's death. In assessing the merits of Diodorus's work, he explains that this portion of the Greek history, which covers the Macedonian civil wars:

is shewed the uncerteintie of fortune, whiche marvellously may serve and helpe to read, and consider the wordly happes heretofore, to great Kings, Princes, and Nobles chaunced, who sometime were in great dignitie and had high authoritie, and wonderful prosperitie. Wherby in seeing [...] the straunge adversitie and miserie whiche happened them, and the continual chaunge of their estates and adventures: may more and more be understood the instabilitie and imperfection of wordly matters. And chiefly in those great and honorable personages, the successors of Alexander the great, by whome is most declared the inconstancie of all things subiect to alteration and chaunge: and where Fortune (to speake after the vulgare opinion) hath best shewed the power and auctoritie.³⁰

²⁸ Justin, *Thabridgment of the Histories of Trogus Pompeius*, trans. by Goldyng, pp. A.ii^v–A.iii^f.

²⁹ Justin, *Thabridgment of the Histories of Trogus Pompeius*, trans. by Goldyng, p. A.ii^f.

³⁰ Diodorus, *A Righte Noble and Pleasant History*, trans. by Stocker, pp. A.ii^v–A.iii^f.

Not only does this interpretation fail to blame the successors for the animosity and ambition that led to these wars, but it even deflates the accusatory tone towards these men in the late Middle Ages, particularly in the *de casibus* compendia of Boccaccio and Lydgate. The latter asserts in the *Fall of Princes* that Alexander's successors cannot handle the sudden adversity brought upon the Macedonian Empire and murder each other because of their greed. Stocker's summary of the Macedonians after Alexander rather recalls the simpler definition of tragedy offered by Chaucer ('a dite of a prosperite for a time, that endeth in wrecchidnesse') that fails to take into account the actions that bring about or at least exacerbate such adversity. Each of these dedications, founded on praise for Alexander or at least reluctant to criticize him and the empire that he built, represents the fundamental shift in his reception from the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century. The new attitude towards Alexander was not intent on following medieval monastic writers in ascribing his downfall to any fault of his own or on viewing the Macedonian Empire, from Philip to his son's successors, as a failure of political intrigue and corrupted morals. Alexander's legacy was fast changing, and the causes lie in the publication of classical texts of a very different nature than those circulated by monastic scriptoria in previous centuries.

Alexander in the Lumley Library

Between the middle of the sixteenth century and 1609, when James I and Prince Henry incorporated the Lumley collection into the library at St James's Palace, the history of Alexander and Macedon as it is known today to the general reading public was almost fully recovered from classical sources. What began in the decade or so after the 1542 inventory of Henry VIII's books at Westminster Palace was nothing short of a Renaissance of the classical Alexander, built on the desires to seek out new sources on Antiquity that had characterized Duke Humfrey and the early patrons of humanism in England and to edit, translate, collate, and disseminate these sources as well. While incunabula introduced an impressive range of classical biographies and histories of Alexander and his empire, including Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories*, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, Curtius Rufus's *Historia Alexandri Magni*, and Diodorus Siculus's *Bibliotheca historica*, to a wider audience,³¹ the sixteenth century witnessed an

³¹ The Incunabula Short Title Catalogue lists fourteen copies of the *Philippic Histories*, six of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, ten of Curtius Rufus's *Historia*, and seven of Diodorus's *Bibliotheca historica*.

influx of Latin and Greek sources on Macedon, printed both in translation and in the original languages. As a result, the books classified as 'historici' in the Lumley collection include a Latin translation of Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandri*, a Latin and French translation of Diodorus's history (together covering every book devoted to ancient Macedon), two printed copies of the *Philippic Histories*, eight copies of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* in Greek, Latin, Italian, and the English translation by North, and four copies of Curtius Rufus's *Historia* in the original Latin and in Brende's English version.

Yet the Lumley catalogue of 1609 also illustrates the early modern introduction to another facet of Alexander's enduring legacy, the debate over the veracity of sources dating back to his own lifetime. Although the classical historians in circulation in the sixteenth century (Justin, Curtius Rufus, Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, and Arrian) had effectively replaced late antique and medieval romances as the most pervasive voices on Alexander, they still raised questions of historical credibility. This group of classical authorities comprises the two groups of Alexander histories still maintained by modern scholars: the so-called 'vulgate' tradition, represented in the works of Diodorus and Curtius Rufus and in Justin's epitome of the *Philippic Histories*, and those based on the first-hand accounts of Alexander's contemporaries, represented by Plutarch and Arrian. The distinction between the two groups is simple, yet the ramifications for medieval and early modern treatments of Alexander were extraordinary. The 'vulgate' authors relied on Cleitarchus, a shadowy historian from Alexandria whose work is now lost, as a primary source, although his 'considerable animosity' towards Alexander was open to emendation by later writers.³² As a Greek historian, Diodorus is the only of the three to offer a compassionate view of Alexander, while the *Philippic Histories* condemn him outright, and the tone of Curtius Rufus, with his admission of the conqueror's faults but ultimate admiration, lies between the two. Within the other tradition of historical sources on Alexander, Plutarch and Arrian offer their own complications. As Arrian wondered in the second century which accounts of the conqueror contained history and which contained fabrication, he concluded that while no one had inspired more discordant historians than Alexander, Ptolemy I and Aristobalus, both of whom served under the conqueror, offered the most authoritative accounts.³³ In weaving together for his readership an entertaining

³² Hammond, *Three Historians of Alexander the Great*, p. 114.

³³ Arrian, *De Expedit. Alex. magni, historiarum libri VIII*, p. 1: 'neque vllus est de quo aut plures extent scriptores, aut magis inter se dissentientes: sed mihi Ptolemaeus & Aristobulus prae caeteris fide digni visi sunt' ('there is no one who has inspired more writers, nor anyone

story of Alexander's life based on, in his words, 'quae quod non indigna narratu iudicarem, neque prorsus incredibilia' ('things which I deem worthy of narrating and not entirely unbelievable'),³⁴ he — like Plutarch — transmitted sources from Alexander's own ranks and thus relatively free of critical remarks towards the conqueror.

Lumley's collection of histories of Macedon was an embarrassment of riches, yet one that still left lingering questions over Alexander's legacy and the basic facts of his successes and failures and virtues and vices, all of which stood across a series of ancient divides. Indebted to the Stoic tradition of the late Roman Republic and the early Empire, the earliest attempts in England to collate sources on ancient Macedon for the sake of historical accuracy (the *Parva recapitulatio*) and comprehensiveness (the *St Albans Compilation*) thus present an altogether different version of the conqueror than do the Greek classics imported from Continental publishers in the sixteenth century. As explained at the beginning of this study, these views extraordinarily rested side by side in Lumley's library. The first, based on the Christian Orosius's exaggeration of the Stoic view and first surviving in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, presents Alexander as 'that most atrocious whirlwind of the entire East', but four centuries later, as Arrian's *Anabasis* began to circulate in England (including item 974 in the Lumley catalogue), this other representative of 'true history' offered a laudatory, but no less authoritative, reception of Alexander from the expansion of the Roman Empire and the ideology of imperialism in the second century. In concluding his *Anabasis* in the manner of a personal confession, Arrian foretells the attitudes towards the conqueror some 1500 years after he completed his work:

Quapropter quisquis Alexandrum incusat ac vituperat, is non ea solum quae vituperatione digna sunt proferens vituperet, sed omnia eius facta in vnum cumlulum congerens [...]. Ita enim sentio, nullam ea tempestate gentem, nullam urbem, nullum denique hominem fuisse, ad quem non Alexandri nomen pervenerit. Quocirca non absque numine eiusmodi hominem teris datum existimaverim, cui nemo

about whom more writers disagree; Ptolemy and Aristobulus seem to me, however, worthy of credibility more than the others'). Ptolemy I was one of Alexander's leading generals and the founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty. Less is known about Aristobalus, but he also travelled with the Macedonian army. Arrian's other source is Nearchus, one of Alexander's admirals who wrote his memoirs, the *Indike*, of his westward return voyage from India. The other primary sources on Alexander are the so-called Greek fragments; see Müller, ed., *The Fragments of the Lost Historians of Alexander*; and Pearson, *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great*.

³⁴ Arrian, *De Expedit. Alex. magni, historiarum libri VIII*, p. 1. See Wiseman, 'Lying Historians: Seven Types of Mendacity', p. 136, for Arrian's methodology in this statement.

omnium mortalium par fuit. quod quidem etiam oracula in Alexandri morte testata sunt, diuersaque aliis atque aliis hominibus spectra & insomnia oblata, & continuata in hunc vsque diem inter homines memoria & gloria, maior quam quae in hominem cadat [...]. Ego vero, tametsi nonnulla Alexandri facta in historia rerum ab ipso gestarum reprehendi, Alexandri tamen ipsius admiratorem esse meipsum citra pudorem profiteor.

Whoever finds fault with and reproaches Alexander, then, let him accuse him not only by citing those things worthy of censure but also by considering all of his deeds collectively [...]. It is my belief that there was no people in that time, no city, and finally no individual to whom the name Alexander was unknown. I have therefore come to the conclusion that not without some divinity was a man of this sort born on earth, a man who has no mortal equal. Indeed, even the oracles attested to this upon Alexander's death, as well as the various visions seen by some men and presented in sleeplessness to others. His legacy and glory, greater than that which befalls [mortal] man, have even survived among people up to this very day [...]. Even I, although I have reproached some of Alexander's deeds in my history of what he accomplished, confess that my admiration for him still exceeds my sense of propriety.³⁵

Although this assessment belongs to the second century, when Alexander was known primarily for 'his military success and with it his driving passion to emulate and surpass the great figures of history and myth',³⁶ it would seem perfectly traditional for many readers in the sixteenth century. As discussed above, Curtius Rufus's conclusion lent itself to a similar interpretation as an Alexander apology akin to the works of Plutarch and Arrian, and Diodorus, too, whose *Bibliotheca historica* Lumley owned in the Latin translation by Bartolomeo Cospi, promoted the conqueror's inherently noble character over his occasional lapses into violent or luxuriant behaviour.³⁷ 'Plerique omnes' ('Most people'), Diodorus writes of Alexander's compassion towards his Persian subjects:

fortuna aspirante felicem rerum suarum exitum nacti inflantur, inolescunt, ac per superbiam humanos et communes casus parum consyderant; indeque non pauci conspiciuntur secundam fortunam non secus, ac grauissimum onus, minus comode sustinere. Alexander igitur, qui ante hanc nostram aetatem seculis multis uixit,

³⁵ Arrian, *De Expedit. Alex. magni, historiarum libri VIII*, pp. 168–69.

³⁶ Hammond, *Three Historians of Alexander the Great*, p. 447.

³⁷ The edition in the Lumley library, *Diodori Siculi Historici Graeci* (Basle: Henricus Petri, 1531), includes the first five books of the *Bibliotheca historica* based on Poggio Bracciolini's Latin edition and Books XVI and XVII (on the careers of Philip and Alexander).

iustissimam et maxime meritam in hac sua historia commendationem a posteritate consequatur.

who have obtained a happy outcome in their affairs with Fortune's help become puffed up and insolent, and owing to their pride, they consider too little how common it is for humans to fall; so it follows that we see many who rather inappropriately bear favourable Fortune not unlike a very heavy burden. Let Alexander, who lived many ages before our own, find, then, a most justified and especially deserved praise among later generations who read this history of him.³⁸

Such assessments left only the *Philippic Histories* as a genuinely critical classical source on Alexander, but it failed to diminish his stature in the sixteenth century, when the fashion was to praise, not criticize, the conqueror. By translating and publishing Greek texts in their search for ancient authorities, humanist scholars had reintroduced the second-century Roman admiration for Alexander, who now appeared as an idealized model of kingship for a new age. Rather than his supposed involvement in his father's assassination, his penchant for heavy drinking, his disconcerting violence towards his own men, and his transformation into a despot who favoured the Persian lifestyle over his native one — all of the anxieties in his career that medieval England had gleaned from the influence of Roman Stoicism on Christian writers and the *Philippic Histories* — Alexander's reputation now rested on his 'natural endowment'.³⁹ In the age of Lumley's library, because of the influence of Diodorus Siculus, Arrian, and especially Plutarch, this 'endowment' was regarded as his courage, his ability to inspire his men, and his refusal to surrender his vision of an empire that stretched towards previously unimaginable limits. By the end of the sixteenth century, in other words, the apologetic tenor of these Greek texts had relegated to historical obscurity their critical Latin predecessors that must have seemed distinctively monastic and medieval.

The Owners of London, British Library, MS Royal, 13. A. 1

Such is the curious intellectual context of BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 in the Lumley collection. Its first two texts (the Valerius *Epitome* and Alexander's supposed letter to Aristotle) represent what Arrian, Plutarch, and Diodorus, who intro-

³⁸ So reads the 1516 edition of Bracciolini and Cospi's translation printed in Venice by Panonica, p. 53^r.

³⁹ Hammond, *Sources for Alexander the Great*, p. 163, assesses Plutarch's belief as such: 'a man's natural endowment [...] both physical and mental, was the basis of his development'.

duces Alexander by the statement that he ‘celeberrimum nomen suum reddidit, ut ueteribus illis, qui Heroes, aut semidei nominati sunt, se prorsus exaequauerit’ (‘rendered his name extremely celebrated, so that he became the equal to those who were called heroes or demigods in the days of old’),⁴⁰ seem to have foreseen: that the conqueror attracted an extraordinary legend and could be thought capable of any achievement. The last surviving item in the Royal manuscript, the *Parva recapitulatio* seeks to refute this very line of thinking. Its redactor, like Arrian, realized that fallacious legends and truthful histories about Alexander both exerted an influence, and he, too, chose to promote his view of ‘true history’. He did so, however, to condemn, not laud, Alexander, and he began an investigation into authoritative narratives of Macedon that lasted until the dissemination of Greek histories some five hundred years later. As a result, there is a certain circularity in the Alexander books of the Lumley collection. This oldest, BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, features both the only romance narratives in the library and the first attempt to assert ‘true history’ over what these romances claimed, while Arrian’s *Anabasis*, the last Greek history of Alexander to reach England, asserted its own authority from the accounts of the conqueror’s officers and, in so doing, presented a version of him no less heroic or noble, only less fantastical, than the one that the *Parva recapitulatio* in the Royal manuscript seeks to reject. With all of these classical texts in the library— it lacks only Plutarch’s moral essay, *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander* — the presence of BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 raises some intriguing questions. Why would the codex have attracted Humphrey Llwyd and John Lumley, and why would it have remained in the collection for so long? Or, to shift the perspective towards the larger context of Llwyd and Lumley’s books, why was the medieval manuscript not dismissed as out-dated among the classical sources on Alexander favoured in the sixteenth century and listed under ‘historici’?

The simplest answer, that one or both men (or Patrick Young, who compiled the catalogue) believed that the manuscript’s first item, the Valerius *Epitome*, represented an ancient authority on the conqueror, is unsatisfactory, given the manuscript’s inclusion within the spectrum of Latin and Greek histories of Alexander. All of these classical texts, despite their disagreement over such matters as the conqueror’s vices and the circumstances of his death, stand in obvious contrast to the Valerius *Epitome* and the *Epistola ad Aristotelem*, with their tales of the Egyptian sorcerer Nectanabus, the man-eating horse Bucephalus, and the Indian trees that foretell for Alexander his death in Babylon. Even the

⁴⁰ Diodori Siculi *Historici Graeci* (Venezia: Panonica, 1516), p. 38^v.

aspects of the Valerius *Epitome* that lent it a historical character for medieval readers (e.g., the animosity between Philip and Alexander and Alexander's violent treatment of his Greek-speaking allies, as discussed in the second chapter) could not have rivalled the authority of so many classical sources, all of which lacked the aforementioned supernatural episodes, in the sixteenth century. The Royal manuscript must have remained appealing in this later era for reasons other than the supposed historiography of its first texts, and the most intriguing evidence is the methodology of its last item, the *Parva recapitulatio*, and what is known of the similar intellectual interests of the manuscript's three owners before its inclusion in the Royal library.

Although the identity of the manuscript's first recorded owner, John ap David, remains uncertain, there is little doubt that he was a Welsh countryman and fellow humanist scholar of Humphrey Llwyd, its second owner. The best candidate for this unidentified first owner is, as argued in the first chapter, an individual also known as John Davies, John David, or Siôn Dafydd Rhys (1534–1609 or 1617),⁴¹ who attended Christ Church, Oxford until 1555, when he left for an extended stay in Italy, then returned to Wales by 1579 to practice medicine in Cardiff.⁴² Besides attending Oxford with Llwyd and the many other Welsh students drawn to the university at the time⁴³ — and his departure in 1555 reasonably explains Llwyd's acquisition of the manuscript in the 1550s — his scholarly achievements are as impressive as those of his elder. While in Italy, John published both Greek and Latin grammars and earned a reputation as a polyglot by producing a pronunciation guide to Italian in 1569,⁴⁴ translating Aristotle's *Metaphysics* into Welsh,⁴⁵ and publishing a guide to Welsh grammar and a volume of literary criticism in the 1590s.⁴⁶ His most impressive intellectual pursuit with regards to his possible ownership of BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 is, however, his participation, along with Humphrey Llwyd, in the defence of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*.⁴⁷ The

⁴¹ Lee, ed., *Dictionary of National Biography: Index and Epitome*, p. 1100; Parry, *The Cambrian Plutarch*, p. 309.

⁴² Harrison and others, eds, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlvI, 626–27 sketches the dates of David's education and travel. See also Maraschio, *Trattati di fonetica del Cinquecento*, pp. 257–64.

⁴³ Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation*, pp. 434–35.

⁴⁴ Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors*, p. 266.

⁴⁵ Stephen and Lee, eds, *Dictionary of National Biography*, xlvIII (1896), 92.

⁴⁶ Harrison and others, eds, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, xlvI, 627.

⁴⁷ Davies, 'Latin Literature', p. 69, cites Llwyd and John Dee, but John David's contribu-

Welsh humanists of the sixteenth century, men like Llwyd and John, the other John Davies of Denbighshire (c. 1567–1644), and John Dee, epitomized the age of investigating Greek and Latin source texts and promoting a ‘learning [that] was based on [...] the diligent searches for lost manuscripts of ancient authors’, and, in turn, ‘the eager printing of books which preserved the results of those studies and searches’.⁴⁸ Such an approach to textual authority and criticism proved especially contentious in the debate over Geoffrey of Monmouth and Arthurian legend, which escalated with Polydore Vergil’s charges of falsehoods in the *Historia regum Britanniae* and which attracted both the John David in question and Humphrey Llwyd. If ‘the skeptical treatment of the supernatural is so regularly taken as a yard-stick for the measurement of humanism in historians’ with regards to the Arthurian legend, then it surely determined attitudes towards Alexander’s legend as well,⁴⁹ with which it had been read comparatively for centuries.⁵⁰

In the debate over Geoffrey’s story of Brutus, the porous boundary between historiography and myth had instigated a political dilemma in which these Welsh humanists engaged in the 1560s and 1570s. The origins lay in Polydore Vergil’s *Anglica Historia* (1534), in which he refutes the etiological story of Brutus’s flight from Troy to Britain,⁵¹ a story that, according to those who followed Geoffrey’s *Historia regum Britanniae*, also explained ‘an English-dominated kind of Britain’, based on the homage paid by Brutus’s sons in Scotland and Wales to his eldest, Lochrine, King of England.⁵² Removing Brutus’s role in British history, as did Vergil, was tantamount to rejecting English claims to sovereignty over a united Britain, and as Tudor scholars wished to maintain the Arthurian legend despite their knowledge of ‘the material, historiographical problems’ in Geoffrey’s narrative,⁵³ a search for his supposedly ancient source text began as an effort to read beyond the translation errors and ‘fables and van-

tions to the defence, based in part on Llwyd’s work (according to Harrison and others, eds, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, XLVI, 627), survive in the Peniarth MS described below.

⁴⁸ Davies, ‘Introduction: John Davies and Renaissance Humanism’, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Hay, *Polydore Vergil*, p. 111.

⁵⁰ See Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. by Wright, IV, 22–29.

⁵¹ Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, p. 43.

⁵² Sarson, *British America, 1500–1800*, p. 8.

⁵³ Escobedo, *Nationalism and Historical Loss in Renaissance England*, pp. 51–52.

ities' of the *Historia*.⁵⁴ In an annotated copy of Geoffrey's text, David wrote in Welsh, for example, 'a long dissertation on early history', in which he 'contends that the Welsh *Historiae* are not more absurd or less worthy of credence' than the founding stories of many other nations.⁵⁵ For Llwyd, the debate became one of semantics as well as of political sovereignty: with an eye towards the current opportunity to recreate Arthur's 'pan-Britannic monarchy',⁵⁶ he invented the modern term 'British Empire' in a Latin apology for the story of Brutus in 1572 ('*Britannicum imperium*') and its English translation in 1573 ('the BRITISH Empyre').⁵⁷ John Dee expanded this vision of English dominion over the 'Three Kingdoms' and Wales to include Continental and even American territories, all of which would comprise not a 'pan-Britannic', but a global *imperium*.⁵⁸ To establish the legitimacy of this empire, one had to sift through ancient sources and defend the veracity of Geoffrey's narrative against Polydore Vergil's disparaging remarks that the *Historia regum Britanniae* was the sort of history that had simply gained authority among those gullible enough to believe in legendary tales.⁵⁹ Promoting the future of the British Empire required a sound refutation of Vergil's stance, and David, Llwyd, and their fellow humanists believed that they had the grounds to do so in the ancient authority of the Brutus story. As Llwyd explains his research into the debate in the prologue to *The Breuiary of Britain*:

god forbid, I should be so impious, in such wyse to dispise the maiestie of Antiquitie. Nay rather, when opportunitie shalbe offered: I purpose to confirme (by bringing forth many weighty reasons, and authorities, which I have readie in stoare for a British hystorie) both his cumming; and also to establish the credite of the British hystorie. Nothings regarding the folly of those, who, bycause they finde not the name of it in the Romane hystories: boldely denie that there is any suche in the

⁵⁴ Escobedo, *Nationalism and Historical Loss in Renaissance England*, p. 54. This is the admission of John Leland.

⁵⁵ Gwenogvryn, *Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language*, 1. 2 (1899), 724. The MS is now Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 118.

⁵⁶ Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, p. 46.

⁵⁷ The Latin original is *Commentarioli Britannicae*, translated into English as *The Breuiary of Britayne*. See Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, p. 46; and Henry, 'John Dee, Humphrey Llwyd, and the Name "British Empire"', p. 189.

⁵⁸ Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, p. 47.

⁵⁹ Hay, *Polydore Vergil*, p. 110, who cites Vergil's *Anglica Historia*, 428. 26: 'qui facile aniles fabellas ad posterios sermone propagat' ('who good-naturedly pass on old wives' tales to later generations').

worlde at all [...] it shall easely appeare, that through the default of writers, and negligence of such as wrote afterwards (amonge whom Livius, even of the Romans them selves, is touched with want of trust) many thinges of greater importance then the departure of Brutus are yelded to oblivion.⁶⁰

Given David's investigation of royal genealogies⁶¹ and Llwyd's textual investigations, as outlined above, that strove to isolate the oldest history of Brutus and Britain and to maintain the accuracy of this history against its critics, their interest in BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 is not surprising.⁶² Llwyd's assistance in building Lumley's collection of Alexander histories advanced this search for the oldest and most credible authorities possible, and despite its earnest attempt to rewrite the commonly held story of Alexander, the *Parva recapitulatio* seemingly appealed to these sixteenth-century owners in a manuscript that was approximately five hundred years old. In obtaining copies of Plutarch, Arrian, Diodorus, Justin, and Curtius Rufus, however, Llwyd and Lumley could trace the 'true history' of the conqueror all the way back to ancient Greek and Latin sources, and what they would have encountered in this range of texts, including both the classical histories and the Royal manuscript, recalled similar issues to those at the centre of the debate over Brutus and Arthurian traditions.

Humanists like David and Llwyd needed both to prove Brutus's arrival on British shores and the political hierarchy established by his sons across the British Isles in order to authorize not only a localized British Empire but, at least in Dee's telling, one that would legitimately extend eastward to the European continent and westward to the New World. In similar fashion, sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century humanists looked to ancient Greek authorities of Alexander in order to promote an idealized empire, built on the unification of various cultures under an idealized philosopher-king. They found in their

⁶⁰ Llwyd, *The Breuiary of Britayne*, fol. 8^v. This translates the corresponding Latin passage in Llwyd, *Commentarioli Britannicae*, fols 7^v–8^v.

⁶¹ Gwenogvryn, *Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language*, i. 2 (1899), 722 notes that Aberystwyth, NLW, MS Peniarth 118 also features a 'pedigree' that follows the descent through Brutus to Queen Elizabeth. The refutation of the Nectanabus episode in the *Parva recapitulatio* may very well have appealed to such an interest in genealogy.

⁶² Besides both men's scholarship in histories, Llwyd combined his interest in cartography, natural features, and historiography in composing the *Cronica Walliae*, an account in English of Welsh rulers; see Llwyd, *Cronica Walliae*, ed. by Williams, p. 1. His own attraction to BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 was surely twofold, then, as the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem* on the wonders of India had enjoyed tremendous popularity because of its lengthy descriptions of eastern geography, flora, and fauna.

classical sources that Alexander had his faults, yet, more importantly, he represented the human potential to forge his own destiny and to establish a world-wide empire, and at the turn of the seventeenth century he seemed both worthy of emulation and capable of being imitated. Through the second half of the sixteenth century, the polyglot grammarian and reader of history John David, the historiographer and cartographer Humphrey Llwyd, and the avid book collector John Lumley had recovered a range of historical authorities on Alexander. Although they did not apply the Macedonian to the political discourse of their time, David and Llwyd relied on a similar brand of scholarship to verify Brutus and to establish the historical grounds on which the British Empire could justifiably extend its dominion, and now, in the new century, that empire required a model ruler. That Alexander could serve this role was the result of humanism as well, particularly in the translation and transmission of the very classical histories that attracted Llwyd and Lumley. All that was needed was a ruler who could match the virtues of the Alexander depicted by Plutarch and Arrian and expand the sovereignty legitimized by Llwyd's generation of humanist scholars. In the next owner of BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, this burgeoning empire found the perfect candidate.

EPILOGUE, 1612

Let all the world come and bewayle our lot,
Come *Europe, Asia, Affrica*, come all:
Mourne *Englishe, Irish, Brittish*, and mourne *Scot*,
For his, (no I mistake it) for our fall.¹

— George Wither,
'Prince Henries Obsequies' (1–4)

No English prince or king had inspired such frequent or hopeful comparisons with Alexander the Great as did Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales, but three years after BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1 became part of the Royal collection at St James's Hall, tragedy befell this next owner of the manuscript and the heir to the Alexander mythos. In 1612, Henry died of a mysterious fever, rumours of poisoning arose, a pall fell over London, the prince could only be regarded as the 'ideal monarch England never had',² and his death — if one is inclined to take the comparison with Alexander and his empire to its natural conclusion — ultimately ushered to the throne a successor who could not meet the expectations of his brother's legacy and who led his nation into civil war. Prince Henry, the young man whom so many had wished and encouraged to become their own English Alexander, did not meet such lofty expectations in life, but in death he became sorrowfully reminiscent of the ancient conqueror. The version of Alexander that Henry was meant to become was indeed worthy of lamentation, for in these early years of the seventeenth century, Alexander served as a model philosopher, king, and conqueror, the three roles informed by his education, wisdom, and valour. Those concerned primarily with taking up

¹ Wither, *Juvenilia*, II, 366.

² Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales*, p. 7. Carlton, *Charles I: The Personal Monarch*, p. 12 provides a contemporary citation that over a thousand mourners attended the services at Westminster Abbey, further proof of the keen public reaction to Henry's passing.

arms abroad stressed to Henry the opportunity of emulating the most recognizable Alexander of the medieval tradition, the paradigm of martial courage and fighting spirit. When Henry visited Magdalen College, Oxford in 1605, however, he inspired comparison with the conqueror in a truly modern fashion. The University Orator hailed Henry as England's 'Rex Platonicus' ('Platonic King') and identified him as the Alexander to James's Philip and Aristotle, a lofty comparison that epitomizes the association of Alexander with Plato's philosophizing in the age of Greek scholarship and influence.³

As argued in the previous chapters, this composite and idealized Alexander of the early seventeenth century is particularly the result of Plutarch's influence. While his *Life of Alexander* had long provided humanist scholars with the portrait of a ruler led by his innate nobility, Plutarch's earlier commentary on the conqueror in his moral essay, *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander* was beginning to exert its own influence. There is scant evidence for its transmission in England in the sixteenth century, but in 1603, when Philemon Holland translated Plutarch's *Moralia*, he left no doubt that these essays, something of a modern-day *Secretum secretorum*, offered a collective guide to ruling as a philosopher and a king akin to Alexander. In his dedication to James I, Holland emphasizes the opportunity bestowed upon the king to rule 'so puissant and populous an Empire' and praises James's own apparent virtues and piety:

to say nothing, how the world hath taken knowledge already, as well as by your vertuous life and politicke regiment hitherto, as also by the prudent and religious designements delivered in those sage and learned Compositions, of your Highnesse penning. That your blessed intention is to holde on the same course still, not onely βασιλικῶς ['kingly']; a point that the Indian Potentate Porus required of Alexander the Great: but also φιλοσόφος ['philosophic']; the singular note that our present Author set upon all the actions of the said mighty Monarch.⁴

The royal duty, or perhaps challenge, is thus to seek Alexander's ideal and to fulfil the duality of king and philosopher by one's virtues. For Plutarch, Alexander was not a ruler of individual merits but of superhuman ability, one whose every action was 'mingled and compounded of all vertues in one'.⁵ He proves himself violent in war and conquest, courageous on the battlefield and just in deliberation and kingship, and he could mingle late nights of drinking with seemingly endless campaigning. In his conquests, Alexander always understood which of

³ Pollnitz, 'Humanism and the Education of Henry, Prince of Wales', p. 29.

⁴ Plutarch, *The Philosophie*, trans. by Holland, pp. 2–3.

⁵ Plutarch, *The Philosophie*, trans. by Holland, p. 1270.

his vanquished foes deserved reproach and which deserved compassion. 'Who', Plutarch asks, 'was there ever, greater enemy to those that doe wrong, or more mercifull and gracious to the afflicted?'.⁶

Although these contradictions seemingly identify a king divided by nobler and baser tendencies (the Stoic philosopher Seneca had provided medieval readers with evidence of Alexander's violent temper and over-indulgence in wine in some of these same qualities), Plutarch portrays a ruler who lives and acts harmoniously. Alexander was, in sum, a man of various inherent virtues and a man who knew how to apply them to the ruling of an empire and to his personal enjoyment equally. He did not live, as previous Roman histories had claimed, tormented by a constant conflict between virtues and vices, nor was his success dependent on the whims of Fortune. By attributing Alexander's conquests to such inherent qualities as his courage and sense of justice rather than to the goddess,⁷ Plutarch explicitly rejects the beliefs of many of his fellow classical writers, who argued that Fortune corrupted the youthful Alexander. Far from an erratic king dictated by external influences, Plutarch's Alexander exhibits the value of education and philosophical preparation for launching his eastern campaigns in the first place:

was *Alexander* so inconsiderate, rash and void of counsell, as to enterprise warre with so small meanes, against so puissant an armie of the Persians? No I wis: for never was their captaine, that went forth to warre better appointed and with greater and more sufficient helpes than he, to wit, magnanimity, prudence, temperance, & fortitude, wherewith Philosophy had furnished him, as with munition for his voyage: as being better provided for this enterprise against the Persians by that which he had learned of his master and teacher *Aristotle*, than by all the patrimonie and renewes which his father *Philip* had left him [...]. How came it then, that [Pythagoras, Socrates, Arcesilaüs, and Carneades] were reputed Philosophers? Surely it arose either upon their sayings which they delivered, or the maner of life that they led, and the actions which they did, or else the doctrine which they taught. Let us now therefore judge of *Alexander* also accordingly, by the same: for it will be found and seene by the words which he said, the deeds that he wrought, and the lessons which he taught, that he was some great Philosopher.⁸

⁶ Plutarch, *The Philosophie*, trans. by Holland, p. 1271.

⁷ Plutarch, *The Philosophie*, trans. by Holland, p. 1270: 'come we now to his deeds. And doe they seeme to cary before them the blinde rashnesse and temerity of Fortune, and bare force of armes and violences of the hand? or rather, of the one side, great prowesse and justice; on the other side, much clemency and lenity, together with good order and rare prudence, of one managing all things by sober, discreet and considerate judgement?'

⁸ Plutarch, *The Philosophie*, trans. by Holland, pp. 1265–66.

As a civilizing conqueror and the agent of Greek culture abroad ('Never had [his enemies] beene civilized, if by him they had not beene vanquished and brought under his subjection'),⁹ Alexander becomes in this passage more than a mere ruler. Enlightened by philosophical training and possessing a 'magnitudo animi' ('greatness of soul'), the trait which earlier humanist readers of Plutarch identified with Alexander, the conqueror also serves as the ideological architect of *homonoia*, or cultural harmony. By the end of the essay, Alexander is hardly a conqueror at all, but a law-maker and a pacifist, roles dependent upon the education that a successful philosopher-king exhibits and that, in the case of Alexander, seemingly transforms him from an ordinary ruler into an ideal one. Most importantly, his education fed Alexander's ambition, a quality that also suggests this 'greatness of soul' and the one on which Prince Henry's comparisons with him most depended.

As J. W. Williamson has thoroughly discussed, the associations of Henry with Alexander and other heroic rulers of Antiquity were based on the principle of 'overreach, the ability and willingness to plunge ahead across boundaries [...] and to overcome the world with arms of holiness', and an ideal that 'emphasized barriers broken down, limits crossed, expectations beyond imagining fulfilled'.¹⁰ Although Henry was warned by Walter Raleigh about ambition and how 'the ironic imprisonment which the limitless horizon imposes was fatal' for the famed conqueror,¹¹ such concerns could not significantly challenge the nearly mythologized Alexander praised by Plutarch and Alexander the philosopher-king presented by Philemon Holland to James in the dedication of his English version of the *Moralia*. In Prince Henry's brief life, the expectations to live up to and exceed this paradigmatic conqueror must have been extraordinary indeed. Subject to an equally 'mythologizing force which had been at work on him since birth',¹² and the beneficiary of countless evocations of the Macedonian, Henry was unabashedly portrayed as 'the Alexander of Great Britain'.¹³ This very notion of a British Empire, coined by Humphrey Llwyd, one of the previous owners of BL, MS Royal, 13. A. 1, belies, however, the true implications of these evocations. Although at least one reference survives in which Henry's court merits praise as a site of education and training wherein

⁹ Plutarch, *The Philosophie*, trans. by Holland, p. 1266.

¹⁰ Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror, Prince Henry Stuart*, p. 35.

¹¹ Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror, Prince Henry Stuart*, p. 89.

¹² Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror, Prince Henry Stuart*, p. 86.

¹³ Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror, Prince Henry Stuart*, p. 34.

young men can become Hephaestion to his Alexander (surely reminiscent of the conqueror's well-known proclamation alongside his friend that 'He, too, is Alexander'),¹⁴ nearly all of the comparisons between Henry and Alexander rely on military virtues. Williamson lists three encomiastic examples of presenting the prince as an Alexander at arms and ready for triumph,¹⁵ and in 1610 Henry received a copy of the *Alexandreis* — the twelfth-century epic in which Nature personified plots to kill the conqueror because he has scorned her finite scope and discovered too many of her secrets — with the inscription that 'your strength surpasses that of Alexander'.¹⁶

These comparisons did not merely represent empty political rhetoric or flattery paid obsequiously but without earnest to the heir apparent. When Henry was presented as the 'Alexander of Great Britain' and the 'glory and nurturing hope of the Britons,/Second Alexander',¹⁷ it signified for many a genuine agenda of leading the Protestant Empire into an age of conquest and expansion. Indeed much of the Alexandrian mythology surrounding Henry arose from the Protestant hope of diminishing Catholic influences abroad, as reflected even in the conflation of Alexander's vision for a global empire and Henry's own ambitions by those who inspired the prince with 'a need to cross boundaries, to burst outward through [...] the suffocating ring of Catholicism'.¹⁸ So profound was this notion of a seventeenth-century Protestant version of Alexander that when Henry died, for some the grief was not so much because of the loss of a beloved young prince as the fact that he had not lived to lead an army on Rome.¹⁹

Still, the outpouring of grief in the fall of 1612 attested to the sense of personal bereavement, the feeling that the nation had lost both a promising leader for the future and a beloved son. Having passed away because of a similarly mysterious and shocking fever — but over a decade younger than his Macedonian predecessor at his own death and a year shy of the age at which Alexander

¹⁴ Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror, Prince Henry Stuart*, p. 33. This proclamation earned the praise, for example, of Curtius Rufus in the passage in Chapter 7, pp. 9–10.

¹⁵ Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror, Prince Henry Stuart*, pp. 34–35.

¹⁶ Wilson, *Prince Henry and English Literature*, p. 93.

¹⁷ Weigl, "And When Slow Time Hath Made You Fit for Warre", p. 157.

¹⁸ Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror, Prince Henry Stuart*, p. 76. Although this insistence on Henry as the Protestant version of Alexander was not without its opponents; see Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror, Prince Henry Stuart*, pp. 84–90 for a survey of the opinions of Sir George More, George Chapman, and Walter Raleigh, all of whom argued that Alexander's pride and ambition cost him his life and empire.

¹⁹ Wilson, *Prince Henry and English Literature*, p. 134.

ascended to the throne — Henry still invoked comparisons with the conqueror in the cottage industry of elegies that sprung up after his death.²⁰ He became an icon of national mourning who now rivalled Alexander in the matter of dying young, at least among those who maintained that the ancient conqueror was a hero who suffered a lamentable demise, but while Alexander remained a tragic figure for many writers because he died at the height of his powers and before he could accomplish even more, Henry died, of course, before he could even begin to emulate Alexander. The prince's unique tragedy in this regard appears in George Wither's verses that introduce this epilogue, for in the act of inviting the nations of the world to congregate in England and mourn Henry's passing, he reverses the perspective of the former dream of a British Empire expanded abroad by the young prince. Now that empire sits inverted, and those who so many had hoped to be conquered by Henry now visit his resting place and simultaneously witness, in Wither's telling, the demise of Great Britain's Alexander and the global realm that he would have ruled as a philosopher-king for the new century.

Alexander the Great: Early Modern to Modern

Although this reaction to the unfulfilled dream of Prince Henry channeling Alexander for the proliferation of the British Empire was typical of the seventeenth-century ethos surrounding the Macedonian conqueror, it would surely have baffled the monastic historians who first came into contact with the Roman portrayal of Alexander. My contention throughout this study has been that English writers possessed a much deeper understanding of the classical Alexander than previously thought. This understanding resulted from a sustained investigation into and reliance on Roman histories of Macedon, first the Latin texts disseminated by monastic scribes and scholars in the twelfth century and then the Greek texts translated by humanist scholars in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. These classical histories afforded not only a means of disputing Latin and vernacular romances but also a progressive knowledge of the 'true history' of Alexander in a manner wholly unique in the Middle Ages. As I have argued, this process of rejecting the falsehoods written about Alexander's life began with BL, Royal MS, 13. A. 1, the late-eleventh-century codex that

²⁰ Edmond, 'Elegies and Other Tracts Issued on the Death of Henry, Prince of Wales,' lists forty-four entries (updated by Wilson, *Prince Henry and English Literature*, *passim*).

features the addendum known as the *Parva recapitulatio*, the earliest surviving Anglo-Latin attempt to present an authoritative history of Alexander and to reject the claims of romance, and the oldest Alexander book in the library of James and Prince Henry. Although this brief text relies on the Christian historiographer Orosius, who was more concerned with demonizing Alexander and the Macedonians than telling an objective record of their national history, we must not consider the *Parva recapitulatio* as fundamentally dissimilar to later inquiries into the conqueror and his empire. In the same vein of historical investigation the twelfth-century *St Albans Compilation* ushered in an age of reliance on Justin's *Philippic Histories* and his unparalleled influence on English writers: this Roman narrative provided (unlike the sometimes sensational attacks levied by Orosius) a full-length and critical examination of Alexander's orientalism, inherent vices, corruption by success, and untimely demise in Babylon, when his countrymen execrated his name, while the Persians wept profusely. The widespread transmission of Justin's epitome in England initiated a radical reconception of the conqueror, as historians reflecting on the classical world now possessed an exhaustive account of the Macedonian empire and Alexander, its most famous and accomplished ruler, transformed into a maniacal tyrant ultimately alienated from his own soldiers.

This conception of Alexander was not entirely out-dated by the turn of the seventeenth century. In the fourth act of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, the Welsh officer Fluellen pieces together a laboured but telling comparison of Henry relegating Falstaff to his past of youthful indiscretions to Alexander the Great's murder of Clitus, one of his senior generals. Although comically executed, Fluellen's remembering of Alexander's career represents two long-standing and conflicting intellectual traditions that defined the conqueror's legacy in Elizabethan England. He begins by defining 'Alexander the big' in a manner representative of the sixteenth century, as he recalls a ruler both 'great' and 'magnanimous', a term that particularly characterized Alexander's lofty stature in England in Shakespeare's day.²¹ Fluellen then recalls, however, a decidedly more alarming version of Alexander, a man to whom Henry would hardly welcome comparison and one that resonated from centuries of patristic and monastic criticism. This is the Alexander at the core of Fluellen's comparison in the First Quarto's text of the play, the paranoid tyrant who 'in his bowls, and his ales, and his wrath, and his displeasures and indignations' killed his old friend and trusted general Clitus for praising Philip's accomplishments at his

²¹ Shakespeare, *The First Quarto of King Henry V*, ed. by Gurr, 16. 9–12.

expense.²² The First Folio provides an even more damning assessment of the tyrant, his crime, and his disreputable character:

Alexander God knowes, and you know, in his rages, and his furies, and his wraths, and his chollers, and his moodes, and his displeasures, and his indignations, and also being a little intoxicates in his praines, did in his Ales and his angers (looke you) kill his best friend *Clytus*.²³

This Alexander is entirely at odds with the Platonic philosopher-king and military and political genius whom many in Elizabethan England considered the paragon of ancient rulership, the same version of Alexander that nearly all of Prince Henry's counsellors would urge him to follow some thirteen years after the production of *Henry V*.

In our modern era these paradoxical urges to condemn Alexander as an egomaniacal ruler 'intoxicates in his praines' or to celebrate him as a symbol 'of military invincibility and the culture hero with a mission to propagate Hellenic values world-wide' still define our opinions of him, and they still do so because of the Roman histories of Alexander's career.²⁴ Well after Prince Henry's death, for example, within nineteenth- and twentieth-century political trends towards colonialism, nationalism, and even fascism, Alexander became a standard for empire building. He was glorified as an aggressive ruler who built a truly expansive realm unified by his 'Hellenistic' culture and one who had achieved more than anyone else (through warfare) the 'unity of mankind'.²⁵ His reception proved its true versatility, however, amidst the period of European expansion and conflict, when W. W. Tarn re-introduced Alexander the idealist.²⁶ Tarn's Alexander was not only the champion for Macedonian and Persian unity but also a source of inspiration for 'the brotherhood of man' (the concept of *homonoiia*), and Alexander soon became a model not of aggression but of treaty and peaceful cooperation.²⁷ Then, as later twentieth-century historians scrutinized

²² Shakespeare, *The First Quarto of King Henry V*, ed. by Gurr, 16. 23–24.

²³ Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies*, ed. by Kökeritz, p. 425.

²⁴ Bosworth, *Alexander and the East*, p. 1.

²⁵ This conception was introduced by Droysen, *Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen*. Badian, 'Some Recent Interpretations of Alexander', surveys this attitude from the nineteenth-century admiration for Alexander in biographies of Prussia and Victorian England to the National Socialist esteem for him in twentieth-century Germany.

²⁶ Tarn, 'Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind'; and Tarn, *Alexander the Great*.

²⁷ See, e.g., Robinson, *Alexander the Great*.

Alexander the individual, considerable anxieties arose about his character and manner of kingship.²⁸ These most recent scholarly investigations have mingled awkwardly with the earlier decades of admiration and emulation, and together they have produced an often confused popular conception of Alexander.²⁹ Today, Alexander the brilliant young ruler enamoured with his mother and determined to avenge his father's losses to the Persians and outshine his successes is difficult to reconcile with the Alexander covered in blood and growing increasingly paranoid and bombastic with each victory.

When Alexander's story or image has been appropriated in any era, the result has not been, of course, a reliable representation of the young conqueror of ancient Macedon but a contemporary of his intended audience and viewers to the point that the line between historical accuracy and supposition or artistic license has often become inexorably blurred. Behind this evolving image, a similar confusion arose from a copious literary tradition composed of equal parts truth and exaggeration (if not outright fiction), which one recent historian has assessed as such: 'All of Alexander's most infamous actions added together are less controversial than the problems associated with the sources for him'.³⁰ Still, as I have argued in this study, attempts were made to distinguish fact from fiction – nowhere as rigorously as in medieval and early modern England – and the identification by the second scribe of BL, Royal MS, 13. A. 1 of a 'true history' of Alexander, one utterly at odds with what many accepted as a truthful story of the conqueror and his empire, resonates with our search for 'Alexander the Great' even today.

²⁸ For a thorough survey of Alexander's modern reputation, see the annotated bibliography in Cartledge, *Alexander the Great* and his introduction to Mossé, *Alexander: Destiny and Myth*.

²⁹ The hero worship of Alexander still survives: *The Search for Alexander: An Exhibition* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC) praised as late as 1995 his efforts to spread Hellenism universally.

³⁰ Worthington, *Alexander the Great*, p. 2.

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